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GENERAL SMUTS



SIBELLA MARGARETHA KRIGE
STELLENBOSCH, 1888

GENERAL SMUTS

by

SARAH GERTRUDE
MILLIN



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To
MY MOTHER

This book has been revised—as to its facts, but not its opinions—by General Smuts. It is based on his papers, official and private; his writings, published and unpublished; letters to and from him; the material collected and cherished over forty-seven years by Mrs Smuts, for whose help the deepest gratitude is here expressed. Nothing has been withheld, nothing even inspected before being offered; no conditions have been made, no exceptions.

The book is further based on knowledge common to South Africans; on facts and sources available to anyone in the world, and noted (if they have been published) at the end of each of the two volumes that make up the book. It is based on talk with General Smuts' supporters and opponents, equally puzzled by something outside precedent; on talk with his family; on a personal experience extending over fourteen years; on an admiration increasing with this experience which, from fear of excess, may be sometimes unjustly subdued; on his casual and unguarded conversation; and on questions deliberately asked him, never evaded and scrupulously answered.

It would seem as if more than appears in this Life of him might have been made of such opportunities. Yet his very refusal to protect himself has a little restrained a pen he would not control.

The book has also, to its great advantage, been revised—again as to facts, but not opinions—by the Hon. J. H. Hofmeyr, Minister of the Interior, Public Health and Education in the Union Government.

S. G. M.

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Chapter I

BOERS AND BRITONS

I

In May of 1899 Milner and Kruger met in conference at Bloemfontein. It was a question of averting war. They discussed chiefly franchise for the Uitlanders—the foreigners—in the Transvaal: whether the Uitlanders were to have the vote after five or seven years in the Transvaal, whether the vote did or did not mean putting the power in the hands of the Uitlanders.

In the middle of the debate a telegram was handed to Milner, and he smiled and showed it to his staff, and they smiled too in the faces of the perturbed and puzzled Boers. The telegram said that Flying Fox had won the Derby.

The discussions went on. Kruger made protests and offers, and Milner told him he was not prepared to bargain. And, at the end of his strength and hope, Kruger said: 'It is not the franchise—it is my country that you want. . . .'

In Tolstoi's *Death of Ivan Ilyitch*, Ivan is lying in bed thinking of what the doctors have told him about his illness. He has a displaced spleen, a chronic catarrh, or perhaps, really, it is his pylorus.

For a moment Ivan Ilyitch has no pain and he lies in the dark considering the interesting matter of his pylorus. In another room his wife and daughter are amusing their guests. Suddenly the old terrible pain comes back. The pylorus! he thinks mechanically, but a moment later he knows.

BOERS AND BRITONS

It is not a bit of bowel the doctors are talking about. It is his life, his death. . . .

2

Smuts was at this conference with Kruger. He was now twenty-nine, a Transvaaler only three years, and therefore a second-class burgher; too young by law for the post he held, which was that of State Attorney—Attorney-General—for the Republic; with Kruger now in Bloemfontein as an official adviser.

He advised a further struggling for peace. The final negotiations for peace were in his hands. Kruger was done with hope in Bloemfontein. The old man, as Smuts says, knew better. When he protested 'It is not the franchise—it is my country that you want', he saw Milner was out for war and nothing else. 'Milner had got himself', says Smuts, 'into a moral coil where he felt war had to be. Chamberlain wanted the Transvaal but he did not want war. Milner wanted the Transvaal—he wanted South Africa rounded up as British—and he was prepared to pay the cost. He was hard and narrow and he treated me with disdain. I distrusted him, and he distrusted me. Fifteen years after the Boer War we were sitting together in the British War Cabinet.'

Fifteen years after the Boer War Milner was writing to Smuts: 'My dear Smuts (I think we might mutually drop prefixes)'; his letter had to do with the air defences of London which Smuts was organising against Germany; it ended: 'Yours ever, Milner.'

'By that time', says Smuts, 'he was a different man. He had returned from South Africa full of the pride of achievement, to receive a vote of censure from the Liberals and to be sent for ten years into the political wilderness. There he had learnt what it is to be subject to fate. When we met in the War Cabinet his narrow imperialism was gone. We

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found we could be friends. He helped me at the Peace Conference to get Dominion status for South Africa. We wanted the same things. It was a matter with him, as with me, of trying to help the world. He was at root a good man. . . .’

Smuts himself was destined after that conference at Bloemfontein to become a Boer General and make peace with England; to become a British General and make peace with Germany; to work for the Union of South Africa and the fusion of those who had been enemies; to help bring freedom to Ireland; to define the British Commonwealth; to plan with Wilson the League of Nations and to found a system of philosophy—he called it Holism—whose principle is the principle of all his dreams and life: coming together; making whole; the co-operation of effort; the union of states; the fusion of peoples; the commonwealth of Britons; the League of Nations—the reconciliation, in his own words, of ‘matter and spirit, the temporal and the eternal, the finite with the infinite, the particular with the universal’—creation with God.

He was born a British subject on a farm in the Cape of Good Hope on 24th May, 1870, and given the names of Jan Christiaan.

3

The new South Africa also was born in 1870. It was ushered into the world by the diamonds of Kimberley.

The old South Africa had begun in the middle of the seventeenth century. The Dutch had settled then in the Cape. Before them the Portuguese had come and gone and the British had come and gone. The Dutch had stayed. Fallen in love with loneliness, they gave up, for a continent of savages, the little close things of Holland—the checkerboard floors and the checkerboard fields. A generation later, Frenchmen, for their freedom of faith, followed.

BOERS AND BRITONS

The two peoples mingled. People from other countries, the little groups that came, mingled with them. Their descendants founded their language on the language of Holland and called themselves Boers—bouwers—farmers. Their land, that had once been the Cape of Storms, was now the Cape of Good Hope. They fought the savages to make themselves secure on the south-western edge of the continent.

Then the English, who had planted the flag of King James there nearly two hundred years before, returned and took the Cape as part of a bargain arising from the Napoleonic wars. They threatened, in their very existence, the loneliness and freedom of the older settlers. They inflicted on them their odious laws and language. They brought missionaries who did not agree that the natives were sub-human. They returned to the natives the territory, even the Boers' own stock, recovered in war. When the Boers trekked away they pursued and enveloped them. At last they deprived them even of the liberty to own slaves. Ruin! Outrage! Better the wild unknown than the terrible British. The Boers took their waggons and women, their chattels and children, and set off on the greatest of all treks, the trek of the Voortrekkers—those who went before.

The Voortrekkers journeyed north and east. They left their broken waggons and animals on the passes of the Mountains of the Dragons. On a river they called Blood River they fought a battle against Dingaan the Zulu, and the day on which they fought is a sacred day to their descendants. They left behind a town whose name, Weenen, means Weeping. They came to what seemed to them the source of the Nile, and in witness there remains the town of Nylstroom—the stream of the Nile. They drank, as they said, of the bitter waters of Marah, and their journey is marked by places called Elim and Hebron, Bethel, Bethle-

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hem and Bethesda. The English pursued them and they fought the English. But at last, having tried to get away even from one another for the sake of more and still more loneliness and liberty, they decided to be content. The little republics they had made in order to get away from one another disappeared. There remained one republic along the Orange River, which was called the Orange Free State, and another along the Vaal River, which was the Transvaal, or, more grandly, the South African Republic.

A handful of people were happy.

They had, each man, a piece of land not always as large as an English county.

They read their Bibles and nothing else.

They saw no strangers and heard no news.

They smoked their pipes and drank their coffee.

They had great families.

Their cattle fed on the veld.

The bit of work there was the Kaffirs did, who also had once been happy in Africa, but were never to be happy again.

A generation passed and it was 1870. In lands of older civilisation men had compelled the earth until it had borne so many children, they were so tight pressed, they scraped the skins off one another. But they did not know of South Africa. South Africa remained hidden from them, its treasure secret, its earth barren—for all but the few already there, a meaningless continent.

These happy few gloried in their desolation and cherished their ease. They had no wealth and wanted none. They were kind to the stranger provided he did not stay. They could face hardship as long as it was not overwork. Already two and a half centuries ago the earliest settlers had created their tradition by formally resolving that 'it would be more advantageous to employ slaves than to work'. But 'having

BOERS AND BRITONS

imported slaves,' wrote one of the two dissentients from the resolution, 'every common or ordinary European becomes a gentleman and prefers to be served rather than to serve. . . . The majority of farmers in this country are not farmers in the real sense of the word, but plantation owners, and very often consider it a shame to work with their own hands. . . .'

Eighteen-seventy and the diamonds of Kimberley made an end of this dream world. A new world appeared in South Africa of competition, strife and the ferment of growth. From the ends of the earth men came to make sudden fortunes. They made them—the men that came made the fortunes, not those already there, who read their Bibles and knew nothing, almost cared nothing for fortune-making. Rightly? Who knows? 'I think', says Oliver Wendell Holmes, 'there is less self-assertion in diamonds than in dogmas.' It was actually in considering how the natives were being civilised by the diamond mines of Kimberley that Anthony Trollope was 'tempted to say that nothing much is done by religion and very little by philanthropy, but love of money works very fast. . . .'

Well, rightly or wrongly, sooner or later, South Africa had to take her place in the world as a bearer and nourisher of mankind; virginity had to be sacrificed for motherhood.

4

In the year in which Smuts was born and the diamonds of Kimberley revealed South Africa to the world, Lobengula, the last of the great Zulus, succeeded his father, and his destroyer, Cecil John Rhodes, landed in Natal. In that year too England claimed possession of the diamond fields.

Before Smuts could read or write, England had further, with eight civil servants and twenty-five policemen, taken a distraught and bankrupt Transvaal . . . for which action

BOERS AND BRITONS

she was presently so soundly punished by the embittered Boers on a mountain called Majuba that (unwitting, alas, how soon gold was to be discovered there) she had let them have their miserable country again.

This was in 1881, the year Rhodes entered the Cape Parliament.

Chapter II

SMUTS WANTS A FRIEND

I

It was at the age of twelve Smuts learnt to read and write. Anyone who does not know South Africa might infer from this that he was the child of distressed and backward parents. Sometimes, in a public speech, when the occasion seems appropriate, he says he knows what poverty means—he was once a poor boy himself. He often says in conversation: 'I am a poor man, I shall die a poor man.' And he actually has the feeling then that he is poor, and also he rather likes this idea of being poor—indifferent to the world's goods—a hermit on a mountain top and so on. He adds that he wishes he were one of those alluvial gold diggers in the mountains in the Northern Transvaal. To live on a mountain, and look for its plants, and just scratch out an occasional pennyweight of gold—no more than enough to live on! A philosopher's life! He forgets, however, that what he wishes no less deeply is to match wits with the world's great politicians and scientists, run departments of state, lead armies, harangue nations, and influence, in the most active way, the fate of humanity. His energy is terrific. Every now and then he says: 'Presently I am going to become an elder statesman.' Or 'One of these days I shall go, like the old Indians, into the Forest.' But not even for a day can he stop working and striving. So much for his mountains and forests.

SMUTS WANTS A FRIEND

As for his actual poverty—yes, he was a poor boy—or, rather, he was hard pressed as a young man. But, as everyone knows, there are different kinds of poverty: the poverty of starvation and also the poverty of not being able to buy a greenish saint by El Greco. Smuts' poverty lies between the two. He had a struggle to get through Cambridge. He is always, owing to the time he was out of office and had to keep a large family on his Parliamentary salary of £700 a year, overdrawn at the bank. But he has three good unmortgaged working farms, and two others which bring in nothing. For that matter, even the good farms are barely more than a delight and hope to him. Whatever comes out of them goes back again. Still, there they are. And also pedigree bulls, pedigree cows, diamond shares which have greatly declined, five thousand books—most of them important—and the various other little possessions such a man gathers in sixty-odd years.

As, however, Smuts does not compute his assets or balance them financially against any present need; as business bores him; as he seldom knows the amount of his overdraft and is always disagreeably surprised when his bank manager carefully tells him, he feels himself to be a poor man.

Yet, if his poverty isn't an El Greco poverty, it is also not a bread poverty. Nor were his parents really poor. He complains about his father's family, that it was so undistinguished, there wasn't even a really poor man or a criminal in it. Nor a brilliant man. They were simply decent, solid people, predikants and farmers, almost as purely Dutch (unlike those that had French, German or English mixed with their Dutch) as when they left Holland two centuries ago. And perhaps that is why Smuts looks—not like a South African Boer—but like a blond figure in a Rembrandt group. He says when he saw the Frans Hals collection in Haarlem he could not help thinking he resembled Hals' men.

SMUTS WANTS A FRIEND

There are still Smutses in Holland, and one of them recently sent Smuts his family crest, asking if there was any connection between them. It turned out to be Smuts' own crest.

Not that he overvalues the matter of a crest. He sometimes wonders, he says, where all this good blood comes from that South Africa boasts about. 'Who brought it here? Our ancestors? Take it from me, they were humble people, despite their good qualities. What were my own folk, I wonder, who landed in South Africa those two centuries ago with their crest? Kicked out of Holland, for all I know.'

He finds his mother's family more interesting. They were called de Vries and had French blood. His mother, who was very religious, had gone to school in Cape Town, and had there learned to speak French and play the piano. Perhaps not much. Enough, however, to give him pride in this achievement of eighty years ago.

And how extraordinary the achievement really was may be judged from the very fact that Smuts himself did not learn to read and write till he was twelve.

The reason was partly that he had been since birth a feeble child—not expected to live long. But also, as the eldest son was getting an education that would fit him to be a predikant, one did not trouble unduly about the education of this second son, who showed, moreover, an aptitude for farming. Whatever he picked up would do. Eight children were born in the family, some of whom died, and, after Smuts' mother died, his father married again and there were two more.

Smuts' father, whose name was Jacobus Abraham, eventually sat for his district of Malmesbury in the Cape Legislature. He seems to have been a rather shrewd but not very imaginative man; these were the days too when members

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of Parliament were capable of opposing the extermination of locusts because they were sent by the Lord; and it is therefore not surprising that he came to legislate for his country but did not trouble about his son's education.

While the eldest son went to school, the second one ran about the farm, trailing, as children do on a farm, after the Hottentots while they minded the pigs or sheep or cattle, and gravely listening to their stories and precepts. Nominally he was being a bit of a herd himself, and earning an odd beast or two for his work. English was not spoken on the farm, nor did Smuts' own children learn English until they went to school.

The Malmesbury district is in the rich western province of the Cape which has the Atlantic on one side; and the farm looked towards great ranges that made the need of mountains strong in him.

This was his life until he was twelve, and then his eldest brother died of typhoid and it fell to Jan to take over the business of the family education.

He is not quite sure how it happened that his name was changed from Jan Christiaan, in the Dutch way, to Jan Christian, in the English way. His earlier papers bear the names of Jan Christiaan, the later have Jan Christian. But in any case it does not much matter how he spells his second name, for his intimates—the very few there are—call him *Jan* or *Jannie*, and his family calls him *Ou' Baas*, which means Old Master, and from his boyhood he has always signed his name J. C. Smuts, as Rhodes, from his boyhood, signed his name C. J. Rhodes.

2

He stayed at the school in Riebeeck West for four years. He was still pale and weedy, and so he remained until the Boer War made a robust man of him. He had very fair

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hair, and light blue eyes, direct, clear and stern. His eyes have stayed stern—rods that seem to go through things to the beyond. And this, in fact, is what they do. Smuts sees, not what his eyes traverse, but what lies on the far side. It is his virtue, and also his failing. . . .

In those days in Riebeek West his mind was so fresh and empty, he says, that he could memorise a book by merely reading it. He lost this faculty about the time he left for Cambridge with a brain stuffed full of classics, science, poetry and philosophy. But he still could do astonishing things in the five years he spent at the Victoria College in Stellenbosch between his Riebeek and his Cambridge days.

Stellenbosch is a little pretty old town, near Cape Town, whose heart is this college. In Smuts' day most of its professors were Scottish. But thirty years later it changed itself into the University of Stellenbosch, it changed also its national character, and, together with many other institutions and people in South Africa, it hated Smuts for what it considered his traitorous friendship with the English.

To the Victoria College Smuts went for the purpose of matriculating. He was also very religious and he thought he might become a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. His people wished it too.

Before leaving for Stellenbosch he wrote the following letter in a neat little hand altogether unlike his peculiar writing of to-day:

Klipfontein,
June 12, 1886.

Mr. C. Murray,
Professor, Stellenbosch.

Dear Sir,

Allow me the pleasure of your reading and answering these few lines. I intend coming to Stellenbosch in

SMUTS WANTS A FRIEND

July next, and, having heard that you take an exceptionally great interest in the youth, I trust you will favour me by keeping your eye upon me and helping me with your kindly advice. Moreover, as I shall be a perfect stranger there, and, as you know, such a place, where a large puerile element exists, affords fair scope for moral, and, what is more important, religious temptation, which, if yielded to, will eclipse alike the expectations of my parents and the intentions of myself, a real friend will prove a lasting blessing for me. For of what use will a mind, enlarged and refined in all possible ways, be to me, if my religion be a deserted pilot, and morality a wreck?

To avoid temptation and to make the proper use of my precious time, I purposely refuse entering a public boarding department, as that of Mr. de Kock, but shall board privately (most likely at Mr. W. Ackermann's) which will, in addition, accord with my retired and reserved nature.

I shall further be much obliged to you for information on the following important points:

First, having passed the School Honours Examination in April last, am I to enter the Public School or the College? Second, in case I am qualified for the Junior Matriculation class, am I exempted or not from a special admission examination into the College, having passed the aforesaid Examination in

- (1) Latin
- (2) English
- (3) Dutch
- (4) Geometry
- (5) Arithmetic and Algebra
- (6) Natural Philosophy.

Third, the time when the College or Public School, that is, the one I am to enter, commences the next quarter. Fourth,

SMUTS WANTS A FRIEND

what are the school fees to be paid. Fifth, how are the requisite text-books etc. supplied, by the committee, the students themselves or voluntarily?

Sincerely assuring you of my deep gratitude if I may have you for a friend, and also, if informed on these points,

I have the honour, dear Sir, of calling myself your obedient servant

J. C. Smuts.

Address:

Riebeeck West

via Hermon Station.

It is not really a bad thing to want to be good, and this letter, so solemn, brave and innocent, must be as touching as any ever written by a boy looking towards his manhood. He is at a village school and only four years ago he left the farm. Yet *he* writes the letter and not a watching, warding parent. He has heard of the temptations of the great world (European population of Stellenbosch two thousand) and he asks a man he doesn't know to guard him from evil. 'A real friend', he confidently suggests, 'will be a lasting blessing to me.' The metaphorical style that has never left him already shows itself. 'Of what use will a mind, enlarged and refined in all possible ways, be to me if my religion be a deserted pilot, and morality a wreck?' The isolation he has always craved is declared. By boarding privately he will not only escape the temptations of Stellenbosch, but such an arrangement 'will, in addition, be in accord with my retired and reserved nature'. He asks finally some practical questions about examinations, fees and school books, because, as it happens, he is selling the cattle he acquired as a child to pay for his education. The professor says he kept this letter because he has never had another like it.

Chapter III

HE SAYS HE HAS NO TASTE

I

Smuts arrived in Stellenbosch and found a difficulty about this matriculation concerning which he wanted to know. Greek was an indispensable subject, and he had no Greek. The year passed, with now and then an effort made to find a Greek tutor, the last term approached and still he had not been taught Greek.

There was a week's holiday before that last term, and what Smuts did then was to get himself a Greek grammar and go away with it to a farm. In addition to the Greek grammar he took a volume of Shelley.

Shelley was his first poet, and he spent Sunday reading him. On Monday he took up his Greek grammar. It interested him. He read it violently for six days, and then he knew it by heart, the whole book, declensions, conjugations, irregular verbs and all. He read through too before the examination a volume of Greek Attic prose on which his class had been since the beginning of the year—telling no one either about that or about the grammar, because he had the romantic notion of surprising everybody. To this day—he is still so romantic—it pleases him to surprise people. He did indeed surprise his professor (that same Murray to whom he had written) when he presented himself for examination. He headed the list.

During the Boer War, out on the veld, harassing the

HE SAYS HE HAS NO TASTE

British troops for the food, uniforms and ammunition which could only be got from the enemy, Smuts carried in his saddle-bag a Greek Testament and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

2

The way Smuts had come upon Shelley was this:

One of the professors had asked him how he occupied his spare time, for clearly he did not need all of it for his class work. He was in the Volunteers, answered Smuts, and, for the rest, he climbed mountains or walked about the veld, reading. He had no friends. He was not interested in any sport. On Sundays he went to Bible class. He also on Sundays taught a group of young coloured men.

'Isn't there anything else you would like to do?' the professor asked him.

Smuts couldn't say. The only excitements at Stellenbosch were the occasional burning down of the old Dutch houses because of their thatched roofs. Stellenbosch hadn't turned out so wildly gay as he had dreaded.

'Have you ever thought of reading poetry?'

'What poetry, sir?'

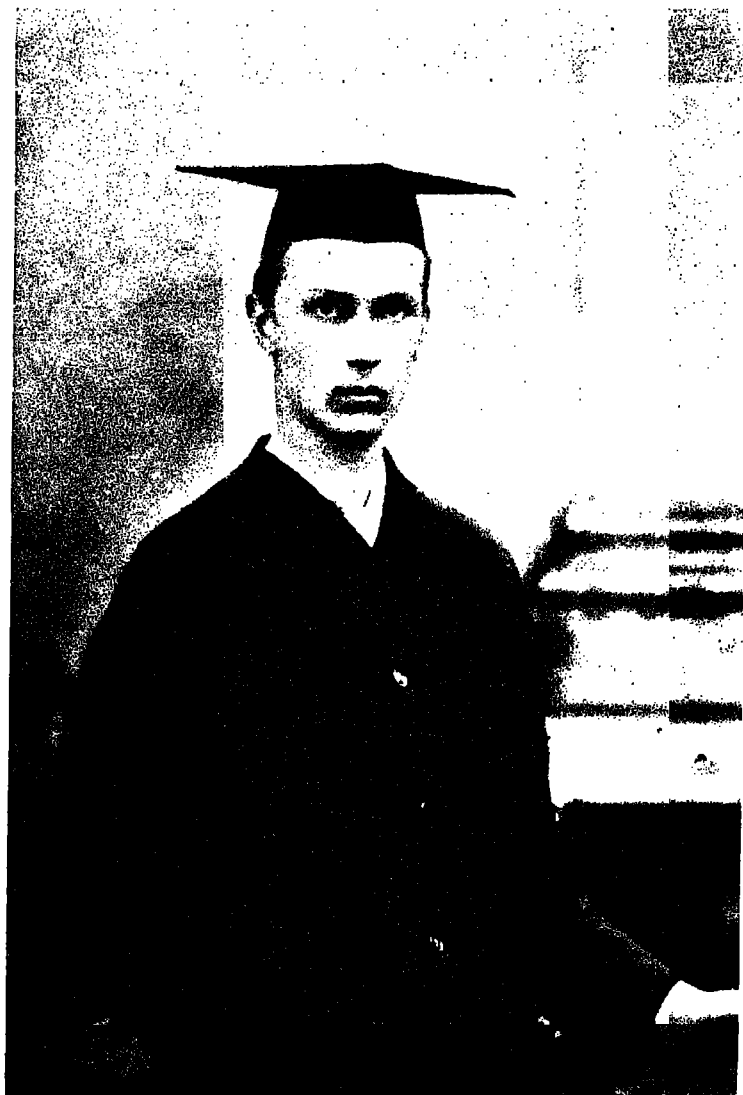
'Shelley, for instance. Why not read Shelley? You might begin with "Prometheus Unbound".'

He began with 'Prometheus Unbound'. He recited Shelley to the veld. He became, after Shelley, a Godwin revolutionary.

3

The love Smuts has for Shelley, for Keats, for Whitman, for Milton and Goethe and Schiller and Shakespeare and the Bible is not founded on any urgent desire towards beauty.

Smuts has little aesthetic feeling. He admits it. 'I have no taste,' he says, 'and I have no sense of humour.'



J. C. SMUTS
STELLENBOSCH, 1889

HE SAYS HE HAS NO TASTE

This is a charming and original confession, but it does him an injustice. Taste is a poignant sense of the appropriate, and so is humour, and Smuts does understand the appropriate. He therefore must have—and he has—both taste and humour. Grotesque stories are told concerning one or two of Smuts' diplomatic adventures in the Great War. Here is one: He had been sent to negotiate a separate peace with Austria. He failed, Briand told Colonel Repington, because, asking for a 'yes' or 'no' to a string of questions and not getting the answer he wanted, he gave a military salute and went home.

Without knowing a word of the facts, anybody acquainted with Smuts—indeed, with Boers at all—could deny that. No Boer has a take-it-or-leave-it attitude—as Milner, to his great irritation, found; as Kitchener, more comprehendingly, also found. The Boer likes to deal.

Even the backveld Boer is not as any other peasant—shy and surly. He has a pride whose origin is less the dignity of the soil than the indignity of the Kaffir. Because the Boer is lord over half a continent of blacks he feels himself an aristocrat and his manners are courtly. Because, at the same time, he is unfamiliar with city ways, he avoids committing himself. So far is he from being bluff that, despite his candid eyes, it is his truest instinct to sidle round a thing rather than approach it directly. Even when the Boer means 'yes', he says 'ja—nee', which should mean 'yes—no'—dubity. . . .

It sometimes amuses Smuts to call himself 'a simple Boer—a wild man from the veld' because he knows how far from simple he is, and his standard of civilisation. He is not a typical Boer, though he has some Boer characteristics. He is that rarity among Boers, a man of Europe. He has a European outlook. Boers generally have not. It would be surprising if they had.

For since their ancestors left Europe three hundred years

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have passed. During a great part of that time Europe was for all but a few of them inaccessible both in body and mind. They became detached from Europe. They became less European than the Americans. It is accurate for the Boers to call themselves, and all with whom they are affiliated, Afrikaners. They are Afrikaners not only by birth, but so strongly in spirit that they instinctively see South Africa as something apart from the world and complete in itself. In these times they can hardly avoid various relationships with Europe, but they suffer those relationships against their innate cravings. That tendency towards isolation is not yet eliminated from them which caused their ancestors to trek, though it is lessening.

Smuts, unlike his fellow Boers, sees everything (it is his temperament and philosophy) as part of everything else. Yet, in certain respects, he is a Boer too. If he pines for the thought of Europe, he also craves the veld. He would rather, like any Boer (and like Rhodes), 'deal' than thrust. He loves dealing. There is a point at which he can speak brutally. When diplomacy has failed, he is prepared to be ruthless. But he gives diplomacy an extremely good chance first. Persuasion, not force, is the ideal of his life, Plato, and not Nietzsche. He is instinctively a diplomat and that is the sort of taste he has—a diplomat's taste.

That is also the sort of humour he has—a diplomat's humour. He gets the loveliest, most delicate enjoyment out of those diplomatic adventures which are the salt of life to him. Years later, as a word recalls to his memory some deal which at the time made his heart turn handsprings behind his serious mien, long after the event, a something runs over his face as he tastes again that bit of fun he had, and the lines of Prospero are wiped out and there on his face stands Puck.

This is his humour. But a sense of ordinary fun, no, that he hasn't. The things from which other people get enjoy-

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ment don't amuse him now and they never did. He doesn't drink or smoke or play cards. Dancing, hunting, racing, shows, games, girls as girls—he has abhorred them ('But you can't say I haven't had a man's life') from his youth. If he must have exercise he will climb a mountain. As a boy he joined the Volunteers. One has only, on some appropriate occasion, to hear Smuts making a public speech in praise of pleasure to realise how difficult it is for him even to begin to understand how anybody can get pleasure from pleasure. The exhibition he makes then is woeful. He can't think what there is to say in favour of this grotesque thing, pleasure, and he deceives no one into believing his desperate words. The worst of it is that he never, as he says, knows while he is making a speech whether it is a good speech or a bad speech, whether a certain sentence is an epigram or a cliché. Afterwards he pieces together, from the things people say, some realisation of what he has done. Speaking gives him no sense of exultation, but, on the contrary, he has sometimes sat down conscious to the point of nausea that his words have belittled his meaning.

As Smuts has a sense of humour but no sense of fun, so he has taste but no sensual appreciation. He does not understand pictures or music or sculpture or architecture. Wherever he is he does not care what he eats or how he lives. Unless the furniture in his bedroom, which is fifteen feet by eleven, were made of boxes, it could not be simpler. He could take a large cupboard from any of the other ten bedrooms in the house and conveniently hang his clothes there. It suits him to have half his clothes hang behind a curtain, where they get the moth. He likes to be uncomfortable. The bed on the narrow verandah where he sleeps is hard, and beside it stands (to hold a lamp, a book and a cup of tea), not any sort of table, but a wooden kitchen chair. When he thinks it too luxurious for him to lie down on his hard

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bed, then he sits on a hard bench which runs alongside the bed. He makes his own bed. . . .

If it cannot be said that Smuts exactly prefers an ugly to a beautiful woman, it remains that he does not care whether a woman is beautiful or not. He is, at heart, a puritan and shy about sex—nothing of a pagan—a man with a sense of sin, a sense of religion, an impulse towards mysticism. For no physical reason could Smuts ever cancel the words: 'How sad and bad and mad it was' with 'But then how it was sweet.'

Yet it is not for any Calvinistic reason or because he has inhibitions that he does not look at a woman's beauty. If, indeed, a beautiful woman happens to be what he calls a good woman (by which he means a foursquare, dependable woman) and also a bit of a highbrow, he is prepared to consider her as amiably as if she were a plain one with the same qualities. The point is that he simply doesn't notice a woman's beauty. His very talk of the spiritual beauty that shines through commonplace flesh proves it.

There was a time when he used to sing—German lieder and suchlike, but it abashes him now to remember that time. 'Oh, no, I don't understand music', he says quickly. The truth is he sang German lieder for the same reason that he read, with a friend, German literature—because he was going through a Germanic phase of highbrow sentimentality. To-day he is moved by simple melodies, but he has never heard Bach, he has heard practically none of the great classic masters, he does not even know the name of any modern composer.

Painting means to him the subject of the picture. He has dutifully been through some galleries, but as art they have no meaning for him. 'Could one be moved towards music and pictures through science?' he asks. 'What about the music of thought?' He defines culture as a spirit risen from

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the arts without knowing them—an atmosphere, an attitude, a fineness of temper and mind.

The passion he has for nature—for the mountains and deserts and nights of Africa—comes under a different head. It is a passion born of the passion of the land, which is a brooding, passionate land. He would not feel it for the fields of England or France or Holland. He feels it for the opal hills of Palestine, because of the Bible, and because Palestine, he says, looks like South Africa in heaven.

This desire towards nature is an urge also philosophical and scientific. It makes him think: What is Man! and it makes him want to find out what man ever was and what he will become.

If one mentioned to Smuts a primrose by the river's brim, he would remember that it was Wordsworth who specially wrote about primroses; and he would think of its botanical name and class; and he would recall that primroses became Disraeli's emblem (did Disraeli truly like primroses—that Oriental?); and he would brood over the fact that to the earthbound character in Wordsworth's poem a primrose was a yellow primrose and it was nothing more—nothing philosophical or celestial. He himself will never see a yellow primrose simply for what it is: something yellow (still, not very yellow) and beautiful (if one has that sort of minor taste).

His love for poetry, for all great literature, comes under yet another head.

4

The reason he abandoned himself to Shelley was that Shelley had the rights-of-man, soul-of-man, meaning-of-life attitude. Smuts did not, in his student days, call the Bible poetry. He read the Bible because he was religious. And he read the Old Testament rather than the New, partly

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for the stories, partly because these old Jews, he says, satisfied his religious cravings, but instinctively because it is in Smuts to be a man rather than a youth, and, as Heine says: 'The Greeks were only beautiful youths, but the Jews were always men, strong unyielding men.' . . . Afterwards he had a period of doubt arising from his Shelley. Then he had a New Testament period. Now he is back to the Old Testament. 'The older I get,' he says, 'the more of an Hebraist' (as he puts it) 'I become. They knew God, those old Jews. They understood the needs of the soul. There is no literature like the great psalms. Then comes Isaiah. I put the Bible above Shakespeare, who has, to me, the deficiency of being without religion. Shakespeare considered everything except religion. He was a true child of the Renaissance, the greatest of the humanists.' . . .

He reads Milton, Goethe, Schiller, Whitman, Keats in the same spirit as he reads the Bible, Shakespeare and Shelley: for what they teach. If he descends from the highest it is to quote something like Clough's 'Say not the struggle nought availeth.'

Towards the middle of 1934 there was an article in *The Times* Literary Supplement about Emily Brontë, saying that Charlotte had revised some of Emily's poems—chiefly the punctuation, and giving 'No coward soul is mine' as Emily wrote it.

And there was Smuts, in the midst of a serious political business that was driving him from platform to platform over thousands of miles of country, due in a few minutes to go off to a party meeting, there he was cutting out this article on Emily Brontë because it was important to him to have the poem exactly as Emily wrote it. 'No, I do not agree that a comma doesn't matter, and the poem did very well all these years as it was. A thing like this belongs to the search for truth—the meaning beyond. It is the soul. You

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alter a word and you alter the emotional figure—you alter the shape of the torso of the soul. . . .

'That is why I am glad I can read the New Testament in Greek. Those people were grappling with something beyond their understanding, trying to express the unattainable truth. Translate their words, change a shade of their meaning, and you throw them out of the straight line of their quest and what they were just about to touch is lost. I would not alter my "Holism" to please anyone. I know it is full of repetition and that I am not always as simple and clear as I would like to be, and many things could be better put than I am able to put them. I do not admire my own style. But I try to express my own ideas, and if that is the way I have of expressing them, then my words, such as they are, must stand.'

This is an attitude perilously near the artist attitude, concerning which Olive Schreiner once wrote to him: 'The idea that an artist should for money set pen to paper and prostitute their intuitions by writing to order at all, is an accusation, in my eyes far worse even than murder. It is a moral and spiritual murder of one's soul which one would commit.'

However, there is this about murdering one's soul. To murder a person means to kill him finally, and also one hangs for it. To murder one's soul is not only less selfish than to murder a fellow being, but there is always the great satisfaction that it can be brought to life again.

Here is one advantage, at least, of the spiritual over the physical. A man goes on living who is murdered in another's heart, but a grain of powder ends him. A woman remains unravished who is lusted after with the eyes, but her casual possession may start ten generations. The spiritual can be endlessly wiped out, endlessly resurrected. On the other hand, the physical has its own noble superiority over the

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spiritual: there is the simple, tragic, splendid difference between something happening and something not happening.

This letter from Olive Schreiner was written when she was forty-five and he twenty-eight.

Somewhere or other, far back in his youth, Smuts must have got this artist conception of one's work—perhaps from her. And when anything gets into Smuts' head it stays there: he is only not rigid and finite because more things and more things keep getting into him. He has a mind as questing and eager in his sixties as he had when, at sixteen, he wrote to the professor that he could not waste his 'precious time'. He has not looked young for thirty years, but his mind is urgently young.

5

He says now that perhaps he could have got to understand music and pictures and other such matters if he had ever met artistic people. But he hardly has in all his life.

And this is true, that he could have got to understand. The love of any art is not an affair of spontaneous generation. No impulse, original or inherited, suddenly makes a million people at any particular time love a certain form of dress or painting or architecture or religion. If there is one thing a human being does not know by the grace of God, it is what he likes. First there has to be instruction and example, then follows imitation, then pretence, then self-deception—the pose becomes a principle—one knows what one likes. Genuine feeling has grown from artificial stimulation, like the Japanese pearl in the oyster. Nature did not put the core there, but the substance around it is of the stuff of pearls.

Smuts, in particular, with his eager, desirous spirit, could have learnt to love beauty. As it is, he has gone nearly all to intellect—but an intellect mystic and emotional.

On the other hand, that business of Emily Brontë and his attitude towards his own writing do declare that words—as words—are important to him. And they are—but not as art, not for their sound or rhyme or rhythm or place or look. He wrote at Cambridge a book of seventy thousand words on a poet (it was never published), and he says there that certain of this poet's lines are beautiful and express various striking ideas, but it never occurs to him to consider the words from the point of view of the artifice that creates emotion. What Smuts looks for in the words of a poem is the thought they express. And that, essentially, is what he should look for. Poetry is the shortest, swiftest, exactest line between apprehension and expression—as one might say, in Smuts' manner, the winging of an arrow so true that it pierces the heart.

The content, therefore, of a word or an idea Smuts can most delicately appreciate, and so in literature he has sound taste. But as he does not at all know the language of musicians or painters, what they say has no more than a vague emotional meaning for him.

Chapter IV

HE DISCOVERS SHELLEY

I

All the time Smuts was at Stellenbosch he was reading and writing—never anything easy and gay, but always the ah-life! ah-fate! type of thing. To this day he does not read novels or plays or any sort of light, imaginative stuff. Sometimes he makes a note: 'Must read D. H. Lawrence' or some other talked-of writer. But he cannot bring himself to begin. It amazes him to hear that Mr. Baldwin reads detective stories—what pleasure, he wonders, can a man like Mr. Baldwin possibly get from reading detective stories? He himself (though he knows *The Dynasts*) has not read even the fate-fiction of Thomas Hardy.

He tried a long time ago to read Meredith because Meredith was the man who, as a publisher's reader, commented on that seventy-thousand-word book of his about the poet. But he found Meredith, he says, too artificial and complicated. Mr. Shaw's English he thinks greater than his thinking. He judges him, however, on very little evidence.

He once met Mr. Shaw. It was in January of 1932 at a small lunch party in Cape Town. They did not establish community. Every now and then an alert look would come over Smuts' face and it would seem as if he were going to say something brightly significant. But he never did say

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something brightly significant because Mr. Shaw was most of the time explaining why every schoolgirl of sixteen ought to read *Lady Chatterley's Lover*—a subject on which Smuts had no conversation.

The rest of the talk concerned the gold standard. Mr. Shaw thought that for a country to leave the gold standard was no better than for an individual to go bankrupt. And as Smuts had for the last few months been charging about the country vehemently urging South Africa to follow England off gold, this subject too fell stonily to earth. . . .

There is one thing Smuts likes about Mr. Shaw's fore-runner, Samuel Butler. It is Butler's criticism of Darwin. The feeling Smuts has about Darwin is that he shut a door which should have been left open. For the rest, he finds Butler repellent—a genius, he says, but inhuman.

He has read Mr. Wells' prophetic books, but he thinks them too pessimistic. He does not even know that Bennett describes him—not altogether happily—in *Lord Raingo*. He had some slight association with Bennett when Bennett was doing war work and he himself was in the War Cabinet. The impression he had was that Bennett was rather incompetent. He has read Julian Huxley, but not Aldous Huxley. Until quite recently he connected the name of Somerset Maugham with an official of that surname in Delagoa Bay, but, having been persuaded to read his short stories, was enchanted by their truth, precision and swiftness. 'When I go into the Forest,' they induced him to say, 'I shall teach myself to read novels.'

Yet Smuts reads all the time. He reads every important new book that concerns world affairs, science and philosophy. There are, in his library, five hundred and fifty books on philosophy; over a hundred on economics; over four hundred on social and national affairs; nearly five hundred on travel; one hundred and seventy on botany; over

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one hundred on other sciences; two hundred and sixty on the Great War, the Peace and the League; seven hundred and fifty on law; seventy on weltpolitik; thirty on education; fifty of poetry; one hundred and fifty biographies and memoirs and over fifteen hundred other books, including the novels and South African books Mrs. Smuts collects. There are twenty-five or thirty long shelves of debates and pamphlets, and a number of black tin trunks—large and small—of papers. Not counting the books that swarm in every room and passage in the house, he has about five thousand bound books. Many people have greater libraries than this—inherited libraries, collectors' libraries. The point about Smuts' library is that every book means something to him, and, except for those Mrs. Smuts collects and people foist on him, he knows what each contains and where exactly it is.

Many of his books were given him—notably the biographies and memoirs of the men with whom he worked in the Great War—but still he spends, as he says, more than a poor man should on books. He sits by himself, when the day's work is done, reading in his library. Or, when he wants to get still further away from everything, on the bench on the little verandah outside his bedroom. At night he reads on his hard bed. And if he wakes at midnight or so, he reads again—generally some book on philosophy. 'Is the Holy Ghost any other than an Intellectual Fountain?' Well, he thinks it is. But he would agree with Blake 'that to labour in Knowledge is to build up Jerusalem, and to Despise Knowledge is to Despise Jerusalem and her builders'.

2

At Stellenbosch it was not only the English poets he read, but he learnt also German and read the German poets and then philosophy and philosophy and philosophy.

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And, when he wrote, it was sometimes verse, but oftener it was essays on subjects like the Cosmic Religion, Freedom, Truth, Politics and so on. At nineteen he wrote an essay he called 'Homo Sum' which dealt with slavery, spiritual and economic as well as physical. He was full of his new learning.

'The darkness of the Middle Ages', he wrote, 'was identically the same thing as slavery. Slaves to the will of the Pontiff, men were equally enslaved by the dictum of Aristotle.' The Person, he wrote further, seeing suddenly a vision of what was to be, throughout life, a philosophic—indeed, a scientific—principle with him, the Person, he declared, was the highest manifestation of truth. The profoundest truth was man's individuality. 'Science has struggled to work out laws, but the history of Humanity will prove that Personality is above Law.' . . . 'We do not believe in Pantheistic Oneness if that means the disappearance of the Individual into the All, and the resolving of that All into Nothingness. We believe in a Unity where all individuals are filled with the one reality—indivisible Truth.'

That was one kind of thing he wrote. There was another kind, not less characteristic: 'Who,' he demanded, 'having felt the heart-beat of the motherland call unto his heart, could fail to respond to the need for rivalling the heroic deeds of Old Europe, perchance in nobler realms? . . . If South Africa is to be great indeed and not merely inflated with the wind of Johannesburg, its greatness will have to depend on its moral civilisation, on the sincerity of its sons for that which is on high, no matter by what road they mean to travel in their upward course.'

He was full in those days of the predestined greatness of South Africa. He saw South Africa as comparable with Elizabethan England—awakening and looking beyond her

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own little affairs to a bigger world. And to this effect, when Rhodes visited the Victoria College in 1888, he spoke. He was one of the junior men, but the principal asked him to respond to Rhodes' own speech. And Rhodes, in those days the champion of the Dutch, was so impressed with the boy that he marked him down for possible use in a future that was to hold a brotherhood of English and Dutch.

He was now, Rhodes, in the force of his life. Eighteen-eighty-eight was one of those significant years which he marked by making a will. He made, in 1888, his third will. For this was the year in which he brought to success his schemes for amalgamating all the diamond mines in Kimberley. Last year he had formed his powerful Goldfields Company on the Rand. The trust deeds of both companies provided that their surplus funds might be used for purposes far indeed removed from the mere getting of diamonds and gold. As Barnato, his defeated and absorbed rival in Kimberley, remarked, some people had a fancy for this and some for that, and Rhodes' fancy was to make an Empire. The diamond business was barely through when Rhodes' men were going north to get a mining concession from Lobengula over all his dominions. Next year Rhodes had his charter from the Imperial Government over all those dominions. The following year he planted the British flag in Mashonaland, and became Prime Minister of the Cape. Eighteen-ninety-one saw him, laden with triumphant sheaves, at the apex of his life.

This was the year in which Smuts, having done other things in Stellenbosch than read poetry and philosophy and preach to coloured boys and speculate on man's destiny, took his degree with honours in both literature and science and was awarded a scholarship for Cambridge. He decided to read law, gave his coloured boys each a present of a Bible, and left for Cambridge with a vision of Rhodes as



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the hero of the British Empire and the successor of Raleigh; with South Africa (it may be seen from his reply to Rhodes) as the Elizabethan England of the day. He was himself a Briton of Dutch descent. In his young mind lay the seed of Rhodes' north and a United States, not only of South Africa, but of Africa.

There came a time when Smuts had to hate Rhodes so much that he was turned violently from England herself, because Rhodes to him was England. Yet Rhodes' 'thoughts' (as Rhodes himself called his inspirations) of a United Africa remained with Smuts, like all the other ideals of his life, for ever. Twenty, thirty and forty years hence he was to be taunted by his own people as a reincarnation of the devil Rhodes. 'Hear him! Rhodes Redivivus with the Large View! . . . Our Nation torn asunder . . . Brothers' blood . . . Broken hearts . . . The same Megalomania . . . Table Bay to Mediterranean. . . '

Already, in 1891, when Smuts set sail for England, a Rhodes man, there was that brewing between Rhodes and Kruger which made Smuts, in the end, a Kruger man. From the very first time Kruger and Rhodes had met in the early 'eighties over the question of the ownership of Bechuana-land, Kruger had distrusted Rhodes. 'That young man', he had said then, 'is going to cause me trouble.'

Well, he could work against Rhodes. But what could he do against nature? The year after Kruger and Rhodes first met gold was found on the Witwatersrand. Johannesburg dates from the year 1886. As the adventurers of the world had come to Kimberley, they came now to Johannesburg. They came in their tens of thousands. They came from Kimberley. The millionaires of Kimberley came. Rhodes came. There were soon (Kruger said) four times as many of these foreigners, these Uitlanders, as of Boers. Kruger could not bear the sight of Johannesburg full of these foreigners.

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Pretoria, his capital, was only thirty-five miles from Johannesburg, it was his official duty to visit every town in his Republic at least once a year, but his most priceless possession, the destined Atlas of all southern Africa, he saw only thrice in nine years. He echoed the words of his rival for the Presidency: 'This gold', he said, 'will cause our country to be soaked in blood.' And when Rhodes protested to him about his hostile treatment of the Uitlanders, he answered coldly: 'I am here to protect my burghers as well as the Rand people. I know what I have to do and I will do what I think right.'

Rhodes could deal with everyone else, but he could not deal with Kruger. He might winningly call himself, for the part he had in the gold of the Transvaal, one of Kruger's young burghers—Kruger was not moved. 'The old devil,' said Rhodes in the end; 'I meant to work with him, but I'm not going on my knees to him.'

Chapter V

HE GOES TO CAMBRIDGE

I

For the last forty years the story has gone about that Rhodes subsidised Smuts' education and set him up in life. Smuts saw Rhodes on that day in Stellenbosch, and twice after his return from Cambridge on a public platform. He never spoke to Rhodes. He did once speak on his behalf. He went to Cambridge on this scholarship that was guaranteed at not less than £100 a year and that in Smuts' time, owing to a bank failure, amounted to precisely this £100, and not the usual £200, a year. To supplement the inadequate sum Smuts made certain financial arrangements. He persuaded a friend who was a Dutch Reformed Minister and a Professor of Theology to lend him the money to take out a life insurance policy. Against the security of this policy the friend would then lend him other money.

Smuts borrowed his first £50 in February of 1892, and another £50 in October. He hated borrowing. He brooded over the fact that, although he was excelling in his examinations, the smallest possible sum should be allowed him from the scholarship fund. At last, struggling, resentful, confident and proud, he wrote a letter to the Registrar of the University of the Cape of Good Hope, to which this was the reply:

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'We are pleased to hear of your successful examinations, and trust the future may be as the past has been.

'It is certainly unfortunate that the inevitable reduction in the value of the Ebden Scholarship has somewhat crippled you. I think that under the circumstances the Council should be disposed to do something more for you. But—let me speak plainly—the probability of its doing so would in my opinion be greatly diminished if your letter to me were submitted to the Council. You speak of being "entitled" to some consideration and of being "unfairly treated". I should strongly advise you to refrain from the use of such language. It is in my judgment unbecoming that you should calculate the income from the Ebden Trust Fund—your calculation by the way is not correct—and assume that whatever the fund yields is due to the holder of the scholarship. You are entitled to "not less than £100 a year" . . . I will not, if I can help it, shew your letter to any member of the Council: it could only produce an unfavourable impression, and would doubtless greatly interfere with your prospect of obtaining further assistance. I strongly advise you to withdraw your letter. . . .'

He withdrew his letter. It was not until July 28th, 1894, that 'an additional grant of £100 was voted to Mr. J. C. Smuts, Ebden Scholar, in consideration of his distinguished success as a student at the University of Cambridge'.

In the meantime his friend Professor Marais went on advancing him money against his life insurance policy, and also paying the premiums on the policy. The only security the professor had in doing this depended on Smuts' death. Otherwise, policy or no policy, he had to trust him.

The final account between them, as the professor 'thought it best, in case of unforeseen accident' to restate, stood, in August 1896, as follows:

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1892

23 February	£50 10 0
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1 October	10 18 9
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1893

1 October	50 8 0
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Life Policy	10 18 9
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1894

1 June	50 5 0
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Life Policy	10 18 9
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1895

24 August	100 0 0
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‘Suppose’, added the professor, ‘you let me have an acknowledgment for the whole amount plus interest at 5 %. I could then return any acknowledgment I have for the original amounts lent. What do you think?’

Smuts bracketed the figures of the statement and wrote against them: ‘August 19, 1896. Acknowledgment to Prof. Marais of loan to be repaid @ 6 % from Sept 1st.’

It will be seen that the professor, on the one hand, did not demand interest at the compound rate from the time of the first loan, but on the sum of all the loans together a year after the last loan. And that Smuts, on the other hand, increased the rate of interest from five to six per cent.

The difficulty Smuts had in getting money, his desperation, may be judged from the fact that to this day the professor’s help is spoken of with gratitude in the Smuts family. For some time, indeed, after his marriage Smuts was still paying off his debt, and it was the professor himself who married him to his wife.

Smuts had met her in his student days at Stellenbosch. Her name was Sibella Margaretha Krige, she was six months younger than himself, she belonged to a family descended from the Voortrekkers, and her great-great-grandfather had been the best-known doctor in Cape Town in

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the seventeen-fifties. The family had political affiliations, its sons became professional men and combined an adherence to sport with a leaning towards affairs of the intellect. A brother followed Smuts as Ebdon Scholar; the son of another brother became a Rhodes Scholar; brothers and brothers-in-law rose high in the Government service. Her father was farming in the district.

Smuts conducted a courtship that was of a piece with his general life at Stellenbosch. He taught his girl Greek, they both learnt German, they both learnt botany, they read poetry together, she still knows a translation he made in 1896 of Schiller's *Das Ideal und das Leben*, and it was she who copied out his seventy-thousand-word book for presentation to a publisher.

2

This book was a study in the evolution of Personality, and it grew from the theories of Personality Smuts had formed at the age of nineteen. In it lay the idea that thirty-three years later was to appear before the world as the philosophy Smuts calls Holism. In it lay also the seed of the theory known as psycho-analysis. 'Reading your book *Holism*' (wrote Alfred Adler in 1931, that one who bases himself to-day on the theory of Power) 'I could see clearly described what had been the key of our science of Individual Psychology. Besides of the great value of your contribution in other directions, I recognised the view in regard to what we have called "unity" and "coherence". I feel very glad to recommend your book to all my students and followers as the best preparation for the science of Individual Psychology.' He wrote again a few months later: 'Dr. Erwin Krausz, Vienna, has translated great part of your work and is enchanted like I had been.'

The translation was not published in Austria because

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Austrian publishers could not afford to issue a book on philosophy; nor in Germany because the sponsors were Jews.

The little book that was its begetter was also not published. Who knew that someone called Jan Christian Smuts—so obviously immature and unprofessional—was destined to become a great man in the eyes of the world, or that in a book concerning Walt Whitman lay hidden the conception that was to make Freud famous? In 1895 Breuer and Freud's *Studien über Hysterie* was published, and in 1900 Freud's *Traumdeutung*.

These were the earliest books connected with psychoanalysis, though, as one sees from reading Freud's *Life*, not the earliest thoughts. Smuts' book on Walt Whitman was begun at Cambridge in 1894 and finished at the beginning of 1895. He submitted it then to the publishers Chapman & Hall, whom he knew as the publishers of Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm*, and their reader, George Meredith, through whose hands also Olive Schreiner's book had gone, reported on it as follows:

'This writer is a thinker and can give his meaning clearly. Had his theme been Goethe, whom he justly appreciates, the book would have seized on our public. Perhaps his exposition of Whitman may commend it to Americans. Here the Whitman cult has passed for a time. He has, however, foundation in the enduring; the book is worth perusal and will reward reflection, though as it is not opportune, it is unlikely for the present to win many readers. Whitman causes him to attribute too much frequency to the quoted matter. But mainly the view of Whitman's teaching is sound.'

Smuts never saw Meredith's letter until a facsimile appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* of August 1909, but Chapman & Hall wrote to him (the date is May 16th, 1895) in similar terms:

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'Dear Sir,—Your book is full of thought clearly and well expressed, but at the present moment Walt Whitman is so little considered in this country that I fear' and so on. The letter ended: 'Allow me to express my admiration for the way you have handled a difficult subject and the sound and safe teaching which your work contains.'

Of these two sentences Smuts made use the day after he received the letter. He wrote from the Common Room of the Middle Temple to a second firm of publishers—Longmans Green: 'A gentleman of great culture' (surely he had the right to call a publisher a gentleman of great culture?) 'and personally quite unknown to me, who has seen the MS. writes me "your work is full of thought clearly and well expressed. . . . Allow me to express my admiration for the way you have handled a difficult subject and the sound and safe teaching which your work contains." . . .'

He described his book as 'an attempt to apply the method of Evolution *synthetically* to the Study of Man' (Certainly George Meredith did not discover this) . . . and the large sale of Kidd's *Social Evolution* . . . 'makes me hope that my book will sell too. I anticipate a good circulation in America.'

Alas, neither the opinion of the gentleman of great culture concerning the book's sound and safe teaching, nor the curious comparison of what seemed to be a literary study with Kidd's successful *Social Evolution*, tempted Longmans Green. They too sent back *Walt Whitman*.

In the meantime Smuts had returned to South Africa to practise as a barrister, and his next letter concerning *Walt Whitman* was sent from Cape Town.

It was sent—publishers having failed him—to the *Nineteenth Century*. 'My original intention,' he wrote to the editor of the *Nineteenth Century*, 'which I have not yet abandoned, was to publish it in book form. But Walt Whitman seemed

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to me so little considered by the British public as to make it inadvisable to do so. I now wish to submit the MS. to your kind attention for the purpose of serial publication in your Review. If you are willing to insert the whole in a series of articles in the *Nineteenth Century*, or even if you are only willing to insert the last two chapters, which I consider the most interesting generally, I shall be very much obliged. I am willing to make such changes as you may deem advisable for the purpose of a serial publication.'

The *Nineteenth Century* too returned *Walt Whitman*, and the next time Smuts looked at it was forty years later. 'I have', he then wrote in a letter, 'read some of the chapters again, and not without amazement. It is full of puerility, but it has remarkable stuff, as coming from a youngster at twenty-four. Indeed in some respects it is better than *Holism and Evolution* written thirty years later.'

Well, there it ends. 'The little book will never', as Smuts says, 'be published now, even if someone wanted to publish it. *Walt Whitman* is a boy's book. I am too far away from those days. Everything is different: the whole world is different and I am different too.'

Yet that, at least, a few of its thoughts may see daylight (if only for that germ concerning whose development in *Holism* Adler was 'enchanted', and because he who wrote it became the man Smuts), here is the philosophy of *Walt Whitman*. Since also they will never appear in any other place, let Smuts' own words, as far as possible, describe those thoughts.

Chapter VI

HE ANALYSES WHITMAN

I

Should the underlying theory of this booklet prove correct,' writes Smuts in the preface to *Walt Whitman: a Study in the Evolution of Personality*, 'and some of the principal features of Whitman's mental development found to be capable of a general application, it seems to me that very important consequences will follow, which will probably throw a new light on some of the darkest problems of life and thought.'

Smuts was now, as a contemporary describes him, a youth with 'a pale face and white hair, conspicuous in the University Library on hot afternoons when all the undergraduate world was at play'. He had no sense of fun, he had no money, he was crippled, as he wrote to the Registrar of the Cape University—crippled for lack of it and borrowing on his life insurance policy. His childhood had been passed on a Cape farm, his boyhood in a village, his young manhood in a larger village, and one has to know African farms and villages to realise how far they are from the ways of England. Since a Boer has natural poise, it seems likely that Smuts, with all his strangeness and shyness, maintained himself with an outward equability. But he has to this day an extremely strong Western Province accent, and forty years ago it was surely terrific. He must, for his accent alone (good as it sounds in South African ears), have seemed a foreigner.

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He must have felt a foreigner. He never speaks of the colleges of Cambridge or its river as he speaks—always—of the mountains of Africa, its skies and its veld. Had he friends at Cambridge? He had no intimates, he says, nor was he influenced by anything there except books. He remained, as ever, contentedly lonely.

It is the romantic tradition that great men are solitary in their habit. Yet one has only to see Smuts stalking along to-day, his eyes on the ground, forgetting talk, just present enough to stiffen the shoulders that want to stoop—one has only to know how complete he really is without people, to accept the fact that he must, indeed, have been as far from the life of Cambridge as from the life at Stellenbosch.

He discovered human beings, he says, during the Boer War. The impression in South Africa is that he has never discovered them.

He is not ignorant of this impression. All the time he was associated with General Botha it was said that Botha was the warm, magnetic personality, and Smuts the cold and powerful brain. Every newspaper said it. It was said in England. His associates said it, and say it still.

Yet why, he wonders (for he is sensitive to opinion even though it influences him not at all), why should it be said, why should he be called aloof? Is he not accessible and amiable?

He is accessible and amiable and also courtly. He has beautiful manners. At the same time he has the sort of personality that makes people diffident with him—big people as well as little people, his family no less than strangers—that even creates enemies. Perhaps it is the instinctive feeling that he will always put a cause above a person—that he can do without persons. This is rather humbling. Then, as Mr. Shaw says, 'Their fellows hate mental giants, and would like to destroy them, not only enviously, because the juxtaposition of a superior wounds their vanity, but quite hum-

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bly and honestly, because it frightens them.' Again, he is complex and unaccountable: he himself is puzzled by his complexity—he remains, he says, unassembled; and behind his vivacity his mind broods over problems and next moves and future moves as over a dozen simultaneous chess-boards, and one feels this multiple preoccupation. Finally, there are those lonely first years on the farm that developed in him the 'reserved and retired nature' he wrote about at sixteen. He has this nature to-day.

He had it also at Cambridge. Certainly he never confided to anyone 'this theory which, if it proved correct . . . would probably throw a new light on some of the darkest problems of life and thought'. As, thirty years later, he wrote his *Holism* encompassed by a sense of defeat which not one of his associates realised or realises to this day; so, even more solitarily in his youth at Cambridge—but not less confidently, without reference to anyone, without fear (even the fear of making himself ridiculous), he sat down to dispute with Plato, Aristotle, Bacon, Hegel and Darwin. What, behind this apparent analysis of a poet, was his argument with them and his simple plan? Nothing less than to question and explain the principle of life itself.

2

He begins nervily by saying that the Idea of Plato, the Form of Bacon, the Idée of Hegel and the similar theories of their followers, all represent 'a certain conception which, though usually said to correspond to nothing existing, has yet an apparently indestructible vitality that invests it with profound significance'. He submits that these philosophies never discovered the actual conception on which they 'staked their philosophical reputation', and he offers to demonstrate that 'the thing corresponding to the Conception does really exist in one case, and has been extended by

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analogy to other cases. *The Conception is a self-intuition, the reflection in the mind of Personality.*

'These profound spirits', looking for some co-ordinating principle, saw (says Smuts) in their consciousness the reflection of the self. 'But they also saw in that reflection the very nature and essence of the Personality. If this assumption is correct we see that there is in the Personality a characteristic activity—distinct in each individual—of the immanent life, the unrestrained and natural development of which will realise the full promise and potency of that life. . . . This Form of Personality resembles closely the idea of Fate. It is an immanent Fate operating in every individual which can be thwarted but never fundamentally altered by circumstances.'

Does Smuts mean by this 'Personality' not only what is customarily implied by the term, but also something like Spinoza's Determinism, Schopenhauer's Will and the *Élan Vital* Bergson was to celebrate eight or ten years after *Walt Whitman* was finally set aside for ever? Is it his idea that Plato, Bacon, Hegel might have seen in it (and did not) the meaning of the Universe? Is there something from Eastern philosophy in his suggestion that Personality is Fate? He confesses in *Walt Whitman* that his reading of philosophy is limited. His business at Cambridge was actually law, and his success in it, according to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, was unprecedented. How much, really, of the philosophy that appears in the course of Smuts' analysis of *Walt Whitman* is original and how much derived? Could Smuts himself tell? It is possible that, despite his limited reading, he may yet have got from without, and not from within, his inspiration. But it is enough that, as a clue to modern thought, his quest and instinct for the essential, his arguments and conclusions, are so impressive as to suggest something one might call genius.

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In *Walt Whitman* he has the idea of testing, as if it were an experiment in biology, 'the actual working out of this conception in one particular case.'

The idea is interesting, but to a man of Smuts' temperament not very appropriate. One may judge from the fact of Smuts' distaste for novels that he is not concerned with any but the abstract side of human personality. Smuts is no Proust.

3

He chooses as 'his particular case' Walt Whitman. Why Walt Whitman? Because 'biological phenomena', he explains, 'are generally best studied in the most perfect and fully developed specimens. . . . Goethe appeared to me as an ideal personality for a subject. But the Goethe literature has grown to such "incompassable" dimensions that its accurate study must be the work of a laborious lifetime. On the other hand, Whitman's work is confined within narrow limits comparatively.' . . .

Yet as Smuts had not to choose merely between Goethe and Walt Whitman, why, again, Walt Whitman? He had his reasons. He was mad about poetry: he thought in terms of poets. The embryo statesman in him was excited about America: Whitman signified to him America.

The limits of Whitman were, as he says, narrow. This simplified his effort. A further simplification was the fact that a poet and his work are as nearly as possible the same thing. If one thinks of it, Smuts' fundamental motive in choosing Whitman as his specimen was the instinctive desire of the craftsman to isolate his problem and thus identify it, not with the immediate, but the universal. Whitman was isolated by his craft, his 'narrow limits' and his scene.

He had also, of course, strongly developed, the what-is-life attitude which has never ceased to excite Smuts, and

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which, for a consideration of what life indeed might be, was quite essential.

Hence Whitman. . . .

4

It may be said that Smuts examines Whitman for proof of his theory and not at all as a poet.

In: *I am an acme of things accomplished
And I am an encloser of things to be.
My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs.
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches
between each step,
All duly travelled, and still I mount and mount.
Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I knew I
was even there,
I waited unseen and always, and slept through the
lethargic mist,
And took my time, and took no hurt from the
foetid carbon—*

in these verses Smuts sees an anticipation of Spencer and Darwin—he calls them ‘a matchless account of human evolution’.

In: *I will not make poems with reference to parts,
But I will make poems, songs, thoughts with
reference to Ensemble,
And I will not sing with reference to a day, but
with reference to all days,
And I will not make a poem nor the least part
of a poem but has reference to the Soul,
Because having looked at the objects of the Uni-
verse, I find there is no one nor any particle
of one but has reference to the soul—*

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here he finds that conception of the Whole which he was later to develop as Holism. 'The idea of the Whole: it has perhaps not yet exercised any great historical influence in the shaping of thought and belief; but I venture to think that it will probably become one of the mightiest intellectual and spiritual forces of the future.'

He searches Whitman for proof of his theory. He discusses him from the emotional, spiritual, realistic, receptive, domestic and social aspects. He traces in *Leaves of Grass* the development of his Personality through his impulse towards anarchy, progress, comradeship, democracy and equality—the equality not only of people high and low, good and evil—but actually the equality of good and evil themselves. 'Whitman's advocacy of equality', he says, 'compels him to accord to those ideas that society ostracises an equal status with those she favours; he is obliged to treat outcast ideas with the same tolerant generosity as outcast persons.' . . . And the Right, the Good (he asks—not uniquely), 'does it exist, is it a reality at all in itself? Is it not rather a broken fragment of the Whole—of the Personality? . . .' 'And if God', he later adds, 'is conceived as the Life of the Whole, including the material and biological universe; including, moreover, humanity and the human Personality—that Life must necessarily involve the element of Personality—extended to and harmonised with the entire Universe of existence'—it must therefore include also Evil or wrong, which are part of the whole and 'thus lifted above ethical distinctions'

It will be seen how already, at twenty-four, he is seeking everywhere that Whole which, in Holism, he conceives not merely as one of the mightiest intellectual and spiritual forces, but as the fundamental physical force—indeed, an active principle after the manner, one might say, of gravitation. . . .

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He ends his examination of Whitman by suggesting that if he has proved Whitman's ideas, through this study of his Personality, to be the same as Plato's, Bacon's and Hegel's, then 'a conclusion of the greatest importance to the underlying theory of this book follows'. That conclusion, he says, and so much for the poetry of Whitman's poetry, could be even better stated in algebraic symbols.

5

But then, of course, the theme of the book (although Meredith did not see it) is no more Whitman than the student's frog is the science of anatomy. Whitman is merely the theme's vehicle and a vehicle often so sticky that the theme has to get out and push it.

Nor does the theme even end, as the sub-title suggests, at a consideration of a man's Personality. A man's Personality typifies to Smuts the Personality in every form of life. 'What is the most fundamental and characteristic property of all life—both in plants and animals? It seems to be the process of developing, growing or evolving from within, from itself, and of reorganising all the nutritive material to its own inner requirements. The process by which life maintains and develops itself' (he says, adopting a philosophical conception of biology both older and newer than the ideas of those 'nineties in which he was living) 'is not merely mechanical, is not merely chemical. Behind the assimilative chemistry of any form of life lies that mysterious force which determines the nature of the chemical and mechanical processes on which life is nourished.'

That 'mysterious force' is the whole-making principle to which Smuts ultimately gave the name of Holism. And from its universal presence he draws in *Walt Whitman* two conclusions:

- (1) 'Every individual form of life is a unity, a centre of

activity dominated by one fundamental property. It is this ultimate internal unity that shapes the innumerable products of life into an orderly and harmonious whole.'

(2) 'In every individual form of life this fundamental property operates according to its own laws and forms.'

From this unity he separates nothing—nothing whatsoever. He enunciates here indeed what Adler, in its development of Holism, recognised as 'the view in regard to what we (psycho-analysts) call "unity" and "coherence"'. 'On looking into the current text-books on that subject,' writes Smuts, 'I find that psychologists first divide the mental or psychic phenomena of human life into the unconscious and the conscious. The unconscious phenomena they set aside as not properly within the scope of their subject. The conscious mental phenomena are then divided into intellect, feeling or emotion, and volition, and these are then separately anatomised in their historical development in the growing individual. . . .

'My own reading—which I frankly admit to be very limited—has never yet brought me to any treatise which shews, or tries to shew, how the mind develops and acts as a whole.

'We do not get at the whole by a careful study and summing up of its parts, since the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The true life in each individual is that unity which underlies all its manifold manifestations. . . . How far has the application of the evolutionary conception of psychology been synthetic?

'In order to arrive at the starting point for this synthetic application, we must first cease to cut up the mind into intellect, feeling and volition. We must also cease to divide its phenomena into the conscious and the unconscious. Thus we arrive at undifferentiated and unanalysed mental

life. What do we gain by ignoring these distinctions? Among others, we gain this: that now, for the first time, we shall be able to study the influence of the unconscious part in our mental life along with that of the conscious part. This unconscious part—the vast region of mental twilight in which the primordial forces of our cosmic nature disport themselves without the interference of the will or the prying of the consciousness—is undoubtedly a very important part of an inner life. . . . By studying mental life as a whole—including both the conscious and the unconscious factors in it—we shall soon get beyond the range of the pure psychologist.’

Smuts states here, in short (if these few sentences hacked from their context do him justice), the theory of psychoanalysis. Not its application, of course, to ills of the body: Breuer and Freud lead there. Nor, for the first time, the theory of the Unconscious: not only Freud, but, long ago, Leibnitz, Schopenhauer, Mainländer and particularly Hartmann, had thought about the Unconscious. What Freud appreciated and the earlier philosophers did not appreciate was the active principle in the Unconscious: that the Unconscious is more than the merely not conscious—it is a region which has its own laws and history. And what Smuts appreciated before Freud, and expressed in *Walt Whitman* as clearly as it has yet been expressed, was the unity of the Unconscious with the Conscious. ‘It is this ultimate internal unity that shapes the innumerable products of life into an orderly and harmonious whole.’ While the strange, remote youth from an African farm seemed to have no occupation at Cambridge other than to come first in law examinations, in the very year in which he took and headed both parts of the Law Tripos, he was writing a philosophical work whose theme was that in ‘the vast region of mental twilight in which the primordial forces of our cos-

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mic nature disport themselves without the interterence of the will or the prying of the consciousness' lay the clue and complement to our whole inner life.

He even knew as instinctively as Freud that in Schiller (he used to translate Schiller) lay the root of psycho-analysis. And it entered his mind to look at a man's unconscious in explanation of his being. He studied Whitman as a biological specimen.

Perhaps (apart even from his indifference to the human side of Personality) it would have been wiser if Smuts had not chosen precisely Whitman for his hero, since Whitman was so out of fashion that nobody looked much beyond his name in considering the little book.

And yet, was it, after all, quite unfortunate? Who knows where the publication of that book might have led Smuts—to what lonely caverns? He might not have been a leader in the Boer War and the Boer Peace, nor united South Africa, nor sat in the British War Cabinet, nor joined with Woodrow Wilson to establish the League of Nations. Professor Gilbert Murray might not have written to him on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918: 'I am writing in this hour of solemn and most awful emotion, to tell you of the profound gratitude that I and some millions of other Englishmen owe to you. . . . You have not only brought in the help of your political genius; you have forgiven your own wrongs and those of your nation, and thereby given us a lesson which I trust we shall never forget.' . . . The theory which, if it were proved correct, 'would probably throw a new light on some of the darkest problems of life and thought' remained hidden under the cloak of Whitman for thirty-three years. And it cannot be said that when it did finally step from its vestures (Freud had become famous in the meantime, Bergson had become famous, Professor Whitehead and Alexander and Lloyd Morgan had fol-

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lowed), it cannot be said that even when *Holism* appeared it exactly petrified a startled world.

Smuts settled down to the law for which he had gone to Cambridge. Having won the George Long Prize in 1893, and headed both parts of the Law Tripos in 1894, he took the bar examinations in London, headed the lists in legal history and constitutional law, and was awarded a £50 prize by the Council of Legal Education.

He read for a while in chambers in London and returned to South Africa in the middle of 1895. He was admitted to the Cape Bar. His home became Cape Town.

Chapter VII

HE PRAISES RHODES

I

Almost the first thing Smuts did in South Africa haunted him with derision for years. Perhaps, even, it gave his life a different turn. Four months before the Jameson Raid, actually while Rhodes was doing God knows what in England, Bechuanaland, Rhodesia, Cape Town, Kimberley and Johannesburg, Smuts—keen, green, adoring and deluded—went to speak on Rhodes' behalf at Kimberley.

This is how it happened.

It may be remembered that in 1888 Rhodes addressed the Victoria College at Stellenbosch, and Smuts, eighteen years old, was asked to reply. Smuts made then a speech so much in tune with Rhodes' own 'Thoughts' that Rhodes immediately set him down in his mind as one of his future young men.

Rhodes was at that time the close associate of J. H. Hofmeyr, the Dutch leader in the Cape. They appeared to be working—indeed, they were—in a common cause of a brotherhood of Dutch and English. When Rhodes returned to Cape Town from Stellenbosch he asked Hofmeyr to keep an eye on the young man Smuts. The young man Smuts, full of his Cambridge honours, had not long taken chambers in Cape Town when Hofmeyr sent for him.

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2

Imagine him sitting there in his chambers, reviewing a book on Plato, and getting a message from Jan Hofmeyr! He was full of that demoniac energy which to this day inhabits him, and, straight from an orgy of work in England, he sat facing the nothingness of a barrister's beginnings. His book—his little immature book in which lay hid so much significance—had been returned to him by two publishers. 'Allow me to express my admiration for the way you have handled a difficult subject, and for the safe and sound teaching your work contains.' He had now sent it off to the *Nineteenth Century*, knowing better than to quote again this commendation of the unknown gentleman of great culture; hoping for the publication of merely the last two chapters; offering to make such changes as might be necessary for serial publication; feeling in his heart that nothing would happen—and feeling it prophetically.

He sat in his chambers in Cape Town, the challenger of Plato and Bacon, waiting for briefs and writing for the Cape Town papers. All the time he was in Cape Town he wrote for the papers. He wrote leaders, letters, articles, reviews. He had ideas on everything that concerned Man and the State. The stuff poured from him. It was not well written. It did not suffer from under-emphasis. Metaphors had a fascination for him which to this day he has not overcome. The exuberance, the rhetoric, however, rose from a galloping mind that could not stop to pick its course. For the longer pieces he got a guinea. For the occasional notes from three-and-six.

Rhodes, said Hofmeyr, had work for a bright fellow to do.

3

One has to transport oneself back to the South Africa of 1895 to understand what it meant for a young man to receive a message from Hofmeyr, a mission from Rhodes.

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man to Kimberley. He went. He was primed indeed. He had nicely swallowed everything. He saw himself, done with a world of ghosts, beginning a life among men—a public life under Rhodes. He defended Rhodes: from his politics in the Cape to his ventures in Charterland; from his ideals for a white South Africa to his plans for a black South Africa. He must have felt that he had done well indeed when Olive Schreiner's brother, a conspicuous politician who later became Prime Minister of the Cape, wrote to congratulate him, saying how refreshing it was 'to find so strong a grasp and so clear an expression of truths . . . in the face of the drenching drizzle always falling from the ancient doctrinaire water pots. . . . I think you will have every success in your career, both professional and political.'

But Olive Schreiner's husband, in his harmful *Life of her*, is less laudatory. He describes the meeting. He does not recall in 'the pallid, slight, delicate-looking man, with a strong Dutch accent' of whom he writes what Rhodes had the imagination to see in Smuts when he was eighteen; nor yet that

*. . . the new-abashed nightingale
Stinteth at first ere she beginneth sing;*

nor even that Smuts became their friend and three years later was in the position to offer him employment in the Transvaal Government service. He describes him with contemptuous patronage and adds: 'The leaders of the De Beers Political Organisation sat on the platform, its own chairman, of course, presiding; the hall was not half filled; the chairman went to sleep, and Mr. Smuts went on . . . His text was the admirable alliance between "Capital" (De Beers) and "Labour" (the Afrikaner Bond)! It was so amusing that we decided it was not worth replying to.'

Four months later Jameson raided the Transvaal, Rhodes

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was found to be in the business up to the neck, and certainly Olive Schreiner's husband had the first laugh.

Never was such a revelation. Suddenly he who, in Hofmeyr's words, had held himself 'a young king, the equal of the Almighty', was everybody's pariah. 'If Rhodes is behind it,' said Hofmeyr, 'then he is no more a friend of mine.' The coma of death was on Rhodes before Hofmeyr forgave him, cabling from Naples: 'God be with you.' The Dutch whom Rhodes had won repudiated him for ever. The men he had most respected said: 'Mr. Rhodes is unworthy of the trust of the country.' People who had forgiven him his corruption, the Matabele war, even his greatness, repudiated him.

In all the country there was no one who felt so deeply betrayed as Smuts—betrayed, fooled, soiled, shamed. There he had stood on a platform in Kimberley, stood and defended—what had he not defended?

It was a year before Smuts could bring himself to speak again in public.

In the meantime he poured out in print denunciations of all those things he had defended in Kimberley. He wrote of Rhodes' 'demonstrative cynicism', 'South Africa's indignant disgust at the policy of Chartered jingoism', the misfortune, the menace of 'the mammoth monopolies characteristic of our country. . . . 'In former days', he confessed, 'I was a temperate admirer of Mr. Rhodes because he seemed to be the visible and tangible political link between the two white races in this country. . . . Little did I dream that the day would so soon come when Mr. Rhodes would be the great racial stumbling-block in South Africa and the very sound of his name would conjure up the worst passions of both races.' . . . '(The English) have set the veld on fire. We lift our voices in warning to England so that she may know that the Afrikander Boer still stands where he

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stood in 1881. If England sends Rhodes back to us, the responsibility will be hers. The blood be on England's own head.'

Yet he could not despise Rhodes. He saw him as at least the fallen Son of the Morning. 'He had that amplitude of mind which throws a glamour round itself and draws men and undermines their independence in spite of themselves. He alone, of all remarkable men of his generation, could have put the copestone to the arch of South African unity. . . . He spurned the ethical code. . . . The man that defies morality defies mankind, and in that struggle with mankind not even the greatest genius can save him.'

In another mood he saw him (Smuts' perceptions were always grounded in his reading) with Greek eyes. 'An old Greek who could have watched the career of the sickly lad that came to South Africa before the great diamond era with little but brains to back him, and who could have watched him ascend, one by one, the rungs of Fame's ladder—till he rose to giddy altitudes where his mighty figure stood as the apotheosis of the Imperial idea—would have become filled with melancholy and thought of Polycrates' Ring. . . . "Call no man happy till his final day."'

A man had no need to be an old Greek to sorrow over Rhodes' fate. Smuts could think of nothing else.

4

He could think of nothing else, write of nothing else, except Rhodes. But he could not think or write him out of his life: Rhodes was in him. He remained in him.

He spurned not only Rhodes himself, but everything connected with Rhodes. He left his life in the Cape. He abandoned his British nationality. Only recently he had written, 'the true explanation (of why Britain is hated) is not British pharisaism but British success. It is the success



J. C. SMUTS
CAPETOWN, 1895

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with which Britain is pursuing the policy of colonial expansion and the comparative failure of the attempts of other people in the same direction which lies at the root of this international dislike of Great Britain.' He became now a second-class burgher in Kruger's Republic and fought and hated the British as a Boer of Boers. . . .

But Rhodes' thoughts remained fibres of his mind. He might despise the 'glamour that deceived men and undermined their independence in spite of themselves'—he never threw off that glamour.

For, after all, he and Rhodes were kin. That desire towards an unnameable Bigness had sent them both, in their boyhood, towards dreams of a religious life—that same desire towards Bigness was, despite all their other differences, an essential community. The offensive newspaper not unjustly called Smuts Rhodes Redivivus. In the final count Smuts wanted what Rhodes wanted: in the words of Rhodes at twenty-four: 'The foundation of so great a power as to hereafter render wars impossible.'

When Smuts was sixty he went to Oxford as Rhodes Memorial Lecturer.

Chapter VIII

KRUGER AND MILNER

I

The Jameson Raid took place forty years ago. Since then the greatest war in history has been fought. Any day may see a war greater even than that. The civilisation of a thousand years is falling beneath us and we cannot stop it. Something has gone wrong with the machine. We are crashing through space; the end is coming; let it come.

Yet people still seem concerned about that old Jameson Raid. Were the Boers to blame? Were the British? Was Chamberlain in it? Did Harcourt suddenly stop the trial because the Prince of Wales was in it? In ten years' time a document will be published that relates the story of the intimate participants, and then it will be argued if the document is right or wrong, and then again if the Boers or the British or Chamberlain were to blame or the Prince of Wales in it, and then good-bye (it may be hoped) to the Jameson Raid. Here is a letter about that document which Sir Graham Bower, the High Commissioner's secretary during the Raid period, sent to Smuts in 1931:

'In 1905 I wrote to the Colonial Office a complete history of the Jameson Raid so far as it was known to me. . . . I wanted to let the Liberal Government know that we had behaved abominably. I have sent a box of papers to South

Africa to be kept till January 1st, 1946, which will be fifty years after the event. I want you to take this long account, read it, seal it up, and deposit it with the Trustees of the South African Public Library not to be opened till January 1946.

'I would have preferred that you should have read those papers and then questioned me about anything that might still remain obscure, and for that reason I asked you to give me two days, but as that seems impossible, I ask you to give me as much time as you can. If you could come here on Monday, you could read the papers on Tuesday.

'But if that could not be managed I hope you will send me a questionnaire asking for information on any points that need clearing up after reading the papers.

'I may say that all the various stories and explanations that have been published bear no resemblance to the truth, and that the truth was rightly suppressed at the time, for had it been made public a South African and a European war would have been inevitable.

'You stand for the reconciliation of the two white races. So do I—so I always did. So did Rhodes until he was led into wrong courses by men who betrayed him.

'It is a complicated story. And I believe I am the only man in the world who can tell it. I am over eighty-three years of age, in bad health, and I can only look a very short time ahead. I trust, however, that the short time between this and next week may be granted me.' . . .

Well, Smuts does not think, on the evidence, that 'a South African or a European war would have been inevitable'. The Raid altered the course of Smuts' own life—but as to European Powers going to war about it . . . he smiles. He did, at the time, with all his nation, think that 'the Jameson Raid was the real declaration of war in the Anglo-Boer conflict, which dated from the 31st December, 1895,

and not the 11th October, 1899.' But he is not so vehement about the Raid to-day.

In fact, the Raid was no more outrageous, except for its trappings, than the taking of the Transvaal in 1877 by Shepstone and his eight civil servants and twenty-five policemen. The idea in the Raid, no less than in the Shepstone annexation, was that a distracted Transvaal should hand itself over to British direction. Jameson's job was to bring this sense of distraction to a head. The plan failed because it was entrusted to men who behaved like schoolboys let loose in a romantic dream of conspiracy and derring-do.

What outraged the Boers—and particularly at the Cape—was the fact that Rhodes was the Englishman they supremely trusted, and here, in the Raid, he suddenly emerged as a conspirator against them. They did not see that Rhodes was not anti-Boer, but merely anti-Kruger. Rhodes became to the Boers, not the enemy of a government, but the enemy of a nation. Smuts felt himself betrayed both in pride and blood.

Yet the Raid may even have retarded the Boer War, for, in making both Britons and Boers suspicious of one another, they made them also cautious. The Raid was not the cause of the Boer War any more than the Treaty of Versailles was the cause of the excesses of Hitler Germany. The excesses of Hitler Germany were caused by what caused the Treaty of Versailles.

Nations, like individuals—since they are composed, after all, of individuals—act as they act not merely because of circumstances, but chiefly because of themselves. 'Personality', as Smuts said in his little *Whitman* (and others before him) 'is an immanent fate operating in every individual which can be thwarted, but never fundamentally altered, by circumstances.' The Boer War was caused, not by the Raid, but by what also caused the Raid. The pain is

the symptom of the illness and not its generator. The root of the illness itself may lie generations back.

The truth is that the temper of Britons and Boers in those days was such—their conflicting ideals were such—that they had to come to grips. The Boers (the Boers like Kruger, not the Boers like Smuts, of whom there have never been many) wanted time and the world to stand still. Why could they not always sit ruminating in isolation while the silly world did as it chose? Were they interfering with that world? Then why should it interfere with them?

But the English wanted, as their phrase is, to get a move on. It maddened them to see life unwinding itself off the reel of time as though it were a slow-motion picture. Their pride also, their English pride, their spirit of the all-conquering Britons who to this day have never known subjection—could not bear the accidental power of this little backveld nation sitting stolidly—where? Of all places—without looking for it, without discovering it, without recognising it, without using or even wanting it—on top of the very means of the whole world's hopes for getting a move on.

The Boers might as securely have sat smoking their innumerable pipes on a barrel of gunpowder.

On the day gold was found in such fantastic quantities on the Ridge of the White Waters, on that day was the Boer War begun.

And yet not only for the gold itself. Not only because of British pride and British acquisitiveness. Britain was not safe in South Africa while the Boers had the Transvaal, while this gold magic lay in the hands of a nation so small and helpless (as it seemed before the Boer War) that any great power might come and take it and so finally disrupt the whole country. There was Germany questing in South Africa since the 1880's; established already in colonies in

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South Africa; shut out from Bechuanaland only through Rhodes; sending that telegram of sympathy to Kruger after the Raid which was more than the irresponsible expression of the Kaiser as an individual: the manifestation, indeed, of Germany's policy. Germany was waiting for a chance to leap at England. It was not without reason the Boers were stimulated by Germany and came to hope for her intervention in the event of war. Germany did mean to help the Boers. She meant, in fact, not only to help the Boers and so get them under German dominion and create a German Empire in South Africa, but also to break England herself. The idea was that if England became involved in a war in South Africa, Germany, with France and Russia, would attack England. In the end France decided that she feared Germany more than England and refused to come in. The plan was therefore abandoned and that is why the Boers, relying on Germany's assistance, believing in Germany's sympathy, but not knowing what lay behind it, were left to fight the Boer War by themselves.

Smuts sometimes says that the Great War was begun when Germany learnt to appreciate the meaning of the British fleet during the Boer War and decided to build a fleet herself.

The preparations for the birth of the Great War were then begun. The Great War was begotten, however, when Bismarck, against his previous convictions, decided that Germany must expand beyond Europe. It was begotten when, in the 1880's, the Germans came to South Africa.

2

It has already been explained how Kruger hated the sight and thought of the adventurers who now came rushing to Johannesburg. The Constitution of the Republic laid it down that 'the territory is open to every foreigner who

obeys the laws of the Republic'. Before 1882 foreigners had been eligible for full citizenship who had lived in the Republic a year and owned property in it. Then when so many of them came Kruger tried to hinder, if not their numbers and wealth, at least their political power, and so now he made a law requiring five years for the franchise.

But still their numbers grew, and, with their numbers, Kruger's hate. 'People of the Lord, you old people of the country—you foreigners, you newcomers, even you thieves and murderers,' he once opened a public address; and after 1890 he became deliberately provocative not only in word but in deed. The Uitlanders were given a second-class Parliament, peculiar to themselves, for which they could vote after two years and legislate after another two years. After fourteen years altogether they graduated into the first class. They were then full burghers and equal to boys of sixteen who had been born in the Transvaal.

Smuts himself, born British in the Cape, could only be a second-class burgher when he arrived in Johannesburg in 1896. He was still a second-class burgher when two years later he became State Attorney (that is, Attorney-General) for the Republic. And he was a second-class burgher when he became a commandant of the Boer forces. Only after taking rank as a general was he specially promoted to first-class burghership.

Well, naturally, in these circumstances, he thought his position rather amusing than anything else. But the Uitlanders didn't think it so funny to be relegated to a pariah Parliament, liable, further, to the veto of the real Parliament. Nor did the Boers, for their part, think it so funny that the Uitlanders wanted to be, not only first-class burghers, but simultaneously British subjects.

The whole situation was extremely ridiculous and it was

also extremely serious. Long before the Raid it was both ridiculous and serious. And when Milner (Sir Alfred then, Lord Milner afterwards) was sent out to the Cape in March of 1897 as Governor of the Cape and High Commissioner for South Africa, and realised with his sensitive, haughty mind how the seriousness was exacerbated by its accompanying ridiculousness—well, then, the situation became not merely serious and ridiculous, but dangerous.

If there was a man who could not bear the sight of Englishmen looking like fools, it was Milner. When, in 1899, he sent his famous telegram saying that 'the spectacle of thousands of British subjects kept permanently in the position of helots, constantly chafing under undoubted grievances and calling vainly to Her Majesty's Government for redress, does steadily undermine the influence and reputation of Great Britain and the respect for the British Government within the Queen's dominions'—when he expressed himself in this fashion it was in a rage of genuine emotion. It was nothing to him that the Uitlanders were so swollen with prosperity and exhilaration (men who had most of them been nothing and had nothing before they came to the Rand) that their constant attitude was a throwing back of their heads and a clapping of their wings and a crowing to high heaven of their glory. He ignored the fact that while the Uitlanders so vaunted themselves in Johannesburg the Boers, whose slaves they were supposed to be, did not even live in Johannesburg, only came to town, humble and overwhelmed, to serve the needs of the Uitlanders. He had no picture in his mind of the Boers journeying from their farms by ox-waggon—travelling ten miles a day, sleeping under the hoods of their waggons by night, bewildered by the excited, exciting town, gaining nothing from the Rand except the small rewards from the helots—or rather from

the suppliers of the suppliers of the helots—for the poor produce of their primitively cultivated land.

Nor did he choose to consider that the Uitlanders were already the subjects, and proposed to remain the subjects, of the greatest power of the day, and that it would never have entered an Englishman's head to claim in America or France or even a South American republic the right to be both a British subject and a citizen of the republic he chose to live in just until he had made all the money he wanted. He did not regard the Transvaal as a republic at all, in that sense. He had it in his mind that an Englishman was entitled to the freedom of all South Africa. And when he spoke of the Uitlanders as helots, he could not think of their haughtiness or wealth, he could only think of the impertinence of the Boers in granting the English (Boers granting English!) on certain conditions, and while they waited for fourteen years, second-class citizenship. Second class! That was the term that stuck in Milner's throat. When he said helots he passionately meant helots. He was a man above any vulgar considerations of wealth and show. British patriotism was exalted in him to the point of holiness. To be British seemed to him a man's noblest destiny. And he could not bear to see Englishmen put in any respect, in any place, in any circumstances, right or wrong, below the people of another nation, in this case the people of a nation of no standing whatever, as he felt, in the world.

He had been sent out to South Africa to continue the policy interrupted by the Raid—Rhodes' policy, Chamberlain's policy—of making a whole thing of South Africa: making it safe for South Africans and safe for England—safe against Germany and great against the future. No more than Rhodes could he afford to let the ideals of a biblical patriarch hinder the march of the civilisation he stood for. And it was his plan, as it had been Rhodes' plan, to use the

Uitlander agitation to fulfil this policy. Now suddenly he found himself caught up in the Uitlanders' own passion. He knew he had to use them, but he was prepared also to let them use him.

3

What right had these 'thousands of British subjects kept permanently in the position of helots' . . . to call on Her Majesty's Government for 'redress'? What right had Britain to make demands at all on the Boers?

No right whatever concerning this matter of franchise. She had the right, under a convention signed in 1884, to complain if certain privileges there granted her subjects were withheld; the right of any state to intervene when her subjects are wronged within any other state; the right of the dominant power in South Africa to prevent any action that, generally speaking, might lead to the disturbance of South African peace. These rights had nothing to do with the franchise. Kruger quite justly said: 'This is my country; these are my laws. Those who do not like my laws can leave my country.' It would naturally have been more agreeable to the Uitlanders to have access to the Head Parliament—the First Raad—and to rule the Transvaal politically as well as financially. It would have been more agreeable and the country might have been better ruled.

The country was not well ruled. Sir William Butler, who for a time replaced Milner as Governor of the Cape and High Commissioner for South Africa, thought the Rand superior in the elements of orderly government to the Californian and Australian goldfields. But, compared with European governments, it was not. Kruger was a great and wise man in his way, but his way was the way of a biblical patriarch with a pastoral tribe. He could read no more than the Bible, and what was going on in the modern world had

to be read to him or told to him. It was said that in the whole of the First Raad there was only one man educated according to the standards of Europe.

Over such a Raad Kruger could rule. What of the younger, educated Boers now ready to take their places? As they respected Kruger for his great qualities, so they resented his patriarchal power. As he respected them for what they had and he hadn't, he resented their resentment. He knew, indeed, that sooner or later he would have to call them in, he was nerving himself to do so, but he understood well that they would then undo him and all he stood for and passionately wished to retain. Not the least reason why Smuts so soon got his chance in the Transvaal was that Kruger saw here, in one of these educated, inevitable young Boers he feared, a human being who had sympathy with him.

4

This was how Kruger discovered Smuts:

There was trouble between the courts and the Raad concerning the Raad's habit of varying the laws of the country by mere resolution (Dutch word, *besluit*). To begin with, the courts had submitted to this habit. They had then decided to withstand it. Finally, in spite of Kruger's warnings, the Chief Justice, rejecting the Raad's power to interfere with existing laws by *besluit*, had given judgment against the Government in a mining case which eventually involved the Government in the loss of over a third of a million pounds.

The judgment drove Kruger to fury. He immediately rushed through the Raad another *besluit* demanding from the judges their acquiescence in all resolutions of the Raad, and not only denying them the right to test, in the American way, all purported legislative acts by reference to the

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Constitution, but making them liable to instant dismissal if they did so.

The judges took arms against the Government. Wealthy Uitlanders guaranteed them, in the event of their dismissal, against immediate want. The High Court was adjourned and legal business was stopped. The Chief Justice of the Cape journeyed up to make peace. The judges agreed not to exercise their testing right until a measure was introduced safeguarding their independence. Kruger promised to introduce such a measure during the session. Argument arose about whether session meant the special session in progress or the following ordinary session. The measure was not introduced during the special session. The Chief Justice clinched matters by exercising the testing right, and was summarily dismissed.

Smuts, almost alone among legal men, interpreted 'session' as Kruger interpreted it. Nor did he regret the dismissal of the Chief Justice. The Chief Justice had once stood for the Presidency; he was involved all the time in politics. Smuts held that a Chief Justice had no business to concern himself with politics, and that, whether he was now rightly or wrongly dismissed, it was quite time he *was* dismissed.

If Smuts' attitude did not commend him to his fellow barristers, it commended him to Kruger.

5

So this is how things were in the Raad and the courts.

But the Uitlanders had other, more intimate grievances. They hated the arrogance of the raw young country policemen, shoving people aside as they walked three abreast down the street. They complained about the inefficiency of essential services—water, light, sanitation. They resented the fact that, though they provided nearly all the money for

education, Dutch was, and had the right to be, the only medium of instruction in government schools.

Then there were the monopolies. A dynamite monopoly raised the cost of mining. A railway monopoly raised not only the cost of mining, but of living generally. A liquor monopoly debauched the natives. There were monopolies in iron, bricks, paper, wool, and even things like sugar and jam. Kruger believed, he said, in monopolies. He said they stimulated industry. . . . Then there was the business of 'presents'. 'Presents' (as they were called) had often to be given to expedite the ordinary routine work of officials.

It has been asked whether Kruger himself was corrupt. Smuts denies it. Most responsible people deny it. Smuts, indeed, exalts Kruger. 'I knew him well,' he wrote in a letter after his death in 1904, 'and the relations between us were like those of father and son. . . . He typified the Boer character both in its higher and larger aspects and was no doubt the greatest man—both morally and intellectually—which the Boer race has so far produced. In his iron will and tenacity, his "never say die" attitude towards Fate, his mystic faith in another world, he represented what is best in all of us. The race that produced such a man can never go down, and, with God's help, it never will.'

But he was surrounded, Smuts admits, by corrupt people, and he did certainly give important posts to his kinsmen. 'The old Boer virtues', said Bryce in 1899, 'were giving way under new temptations. The Volksraad (as is believed in South Africa) became corrupt, though, of course, there have always been pure and upright men among its members. The civil service was not above suspicion. Rich men and powerful corporations surrounded those who had concessions to give or the means of influencing legislation whether directly or indirectly. The very inexperience of the Boer ranchman who came up as a member of the Volks-

raad made him an easy prey.' . . . 'What has the wealth of Johannesburg done for us?' cried State Secretary Reitz—once President of the Orange Free State—when the Boer War was over. 'The money has only injured the noble character of our people. This is common knowledge. . . . The money obtained there was to our detriment. It would tend to our advantage to be rid of Johannesburg. . . .'

If, however, it was the Boers who were the takers, it was the Uitlanders who were the tempters. If, in addition to the First Raad, and the Uitlanders' Second Raad, there was what they ironically called the Third Raad, that Third Raad was the Raad of the representatives of those tempters.

It has been asked how, if Kruger were not corrupt, he could have become so wealthy. To begin with, he had a salary as President which towards the end was £7,000 a year, and he also had a hospitality allowance. Then he lived in the most modest way in his little house opposite the Doppe Church (extremely Calvinistic), where he sometimes preached: people with an income of £1,000 a year would not live in such a house to-day. Then he was elected President four times—the third time against the appeal of his opponent, who claimed that the returns had been falsified. Then, like all the Boers who had anything at all, he owned farms. He sold his Geduld estate alone for £120,000 and that was sold again for half a million, and is now worth many millions, because its gold mines are among the richest in the country. . . .

Certainly the Uitlanders had their chagrins. But that did not entitle them legally to the privileges they demanded. When the helots called vainly, in Milner's sad words, upon Her Majesty's Government for redress, that was just exactly what they were entitled to do: to call vainly.

Yet by the time Smuts came to Johannesburg the fundamental futility of their calling mattered as it had not done

even five years before. Five years before deep-level mining had not been dreamt of. The Uitlanders had thought they would just take out the gold on the surface and go away.

But when in the early 'nineties it was found that there was gold deep in each mine—gold enough to give it a life of thirty, forty, fifty years—gold a mile down—perhaps two miles down, gold everywhere, then people were not so sure that they would quickly go away. And by this time too they had become fascinated by the place. It was not only that, as a pro-Boer said, 'every luxury of life, every extravagance of behaviour, every form of private vice flourished unchecked; every man and woman said and did what seemed good in his eyes'. It was not only that every person—from the Cornish miner to the owner of his mine—had the same gambler's hope and fever—everybody in everything—everybody somebody. It was not even the good humour, the generosity, the tolerance that existed between one individual and another. It was the luring spirit of Johannesburg itself, which was six thousand feet high and had the most exhilarating climate in the world, and was good for all green things and for children, and was all hills and distances—dumps and slumps, heights and hopes. No wonder people were excited in Johannesburg. The very air was an excitement.

Now the Uitlanders were determined neither to remain *Uitlanders* nor to be treated as such. Their grievances might not legally entitle them to the intervention of their motherland. Their lives, beliefs, possessions and opportunities might not be at stake. But they were branded as second-class citizens (fourteen years to wait for first-class burghership!). To this humiliation they would not submit. They linked themselves into unions and leagues to combat their disabilities. They called themselves Reformers. The failure of the Raid, so far from quietening them, infuriated them

into greater urgency. They complained that England had allowed both that defeat, and, even more humiliatingly, the defeat of Majuba in 1881, to stay unavenged, and that she had broken her pledges both to them and to the natives (suddenly they were concerned about the natives!) and thus lowered the pride of Britain in South Africa. And all this, they said, 'for a people who had always ill-treated the Kaf-firs, who had misgoverned their own Republic into bankruptcy and chaos, who had always been the enemies of Britain, who were', as Bryce interpreted the Uitlanders, 'incapable of appreciating magnanimity and would construe forbearance as cowardice.'

The Uitlanders said as much on platforms and in the newspapers, at street corners and in bars. They displayed in windows insulting caricatures of the President. They openly preached the destruction of the 'corrupt oligarchy at Pretoria'. No sooner was Milner in South Africa than they began 'conditioning' him. The Reformers, the Uitlander Council, inoculated Milner with their virus. As he was more sincere, more disinterested, purer than they, the virus affected him seriously. Soon he could see nothing anywhere but the humiliation of England.

Certainly when Milner said helots he meant helots.

This was the atmosphere in Johannesburg when Smuts arrived to make his home there.

Chapter IX

SMUTS: SECOND-CLASS BURGHER: STATE ATTORNEY

I

He arrived in March of 1896 to spy out the hopes he had in the north, returned to Cape Town to make arrangements for going away, and in September was admitted to practise at the Transvaal Bar.

To begin with, he continued his newspaper work and he also held evening classes in law, but, within six months, he felt himself in a position to marry, and he went to Stellenbosch for Sibella Krige and brought her to Johannesburg.

The friends they had, says Mrs. Smuts, were not among the people who made Johannesburg gay. They were, generally speaking, those other young Dutch folk who had left the Cape for the Transvaal after the Jameson Raid. Nor had she the time, she says, to be very gay. Within a year there were twin girls, born too soon and dead in a month, and within another year a boy, who died while Smuts was on campaign. They lived at the top of the street called Twist Street, and afterwards in that suburb, well considered then, but to-day the home of many coloured people, called Doornfontein.

Smuts himself was rapidly advancing. He did not need for long to continue his journalism and night classes in law. In February of 1897 his law pupils at a formal dinner, and

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with speech-making, marked the close of his lectures in law and jurisprudence.

A year later he was briefed to defend Von Veltheim, the spectacular criminal who shot Barney Barnato's nephew, Woolf Joel—that Joel who had assisted Barnato in the negotiations with Rhodes over the diamond fields. But Smuts never appeared in the case, for just then Kruger offered him the post of State Attorney. He was not legally eligible for the post: he was two years under the statutory age of thirty. But everything—his youth, his recent arrival in the country, his second-class burghership, his political inexperience—all these disabilities were swept aside by Kruger's determination to have this one brilliant young Boer who, he felt, had sympathy for him. There was, indeed, talk of his becoming State Secretary—the highest office, after that of Kruger himself, in the land: equal, really, to a Premiership. But here his youth and second-class burghership were too much even for Kruger to get over, and F. W. Reitz, an ex-President of the Free State (and father of Smuts' follower through life, the author of *Commando* and *Trekking On*), became State Secretary. Smuts was gazetted State Attorney just as soon as he was twenty-eight, and immediately a kind of man was revealed in the public life of the Transvaal like nothing known there before, and like nothing known in South Africa or Greater Britain since.

2

A photograph taken of Smuts at this period shows him for the last time as clean shaven, with tight lips, short, square chin, and hungry, angry eyes.

Those hungry, angry eyes were the man. Smuts' permanent attitude towards life until the age of nearly fifty was one of 'Stand and deliver!' At the age of nearly fifty he spent six months in Paris during the peace negotiations



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after the Great War, and those six months, he says, for ever changed him. 'The misery after the Boer War was nothing to it,' he says. 'It was a break in one's own life, but not in the whole world. Paris showed me the crack in life itself. It broke me. It changed me. I am a softer man than I used to be. Whether for better or for worse, I don't know. I was hard as a young man—hard and confident and successful.'

His public life opened characteristically. He dismissed the head of the detective force and took control of the detective force himself. He was new to the whole business of administration, indeed to public life at all. He had been nothing but a student. He was prepared, within a few months of taking high office, to double his work in it. So he had been prepared a few years back to take both parts of his Law Tripos at once and, in addition, to write a book on a poet that was a book of philosophy. So he was prepared to command military forces; to hold, in the Union Cabinet, four Portfolios together; to sit, during the Great War, in the War Cabinet, and preside over important war committees, and organise the Royal Air Force and the air defences of London, and settle strikes, and inspect the war situation in France, and plan campaigns in Palestine and elsewhere, and attempt to make a separate peace with Austria and Hungary, and work out a scheme for a League of Nations. So he was prepared later to advise the King what to do about Ireland, and to settle Ireland's status and Dominion status generally. So he was prepared to offer the world a new system of philosophy, to preside over the centenary meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and to open that meeting with an address on the meaning of life from the point of view not merely of philosophy but of every aspect of science.

It is very hard really to think of anything Smuts has not

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been prepared to do in his life. Why not? he asks; it is all—from science to soldiering—only a matter of thinking.

The detective business was symptomatic of his ruthless self-confidence. It was odd, he found, that while a few little men, dealing illicitly in liquor and gold, were sometimes caught, the bosses were not. How did the big men keep outside the law? Why, under the existing chief, were they so safe?

Other State Attorneys had asked those questions before him. One had resigned. All had been helpless. 'A system of bribery or blackmail . . .', wrote J. A. Hobson in 1900, 'was practised by the Johannesburg police in dealing with the illicit bars and disorderly houses, resembling that which the Tammany police established in New York, and that which even now prevails in some parts of the West End of London.' The contemptuous chief certainly had not feared this pale and haggard youth—he looked a youth. But Smuts charged him with no dereliction of duty, he attempted to prove nothing against him, he created no difficulties. He asked the chief to resign on account of his arrogance, and the chief, looking into the cold, direct eyes, resigned.

'I do not know how to explain,' he afterwards said in bewilderment. 'I am described by the State Attorney, Mr. Smuts, in a communication to the Government as a . . . "particularly smart man, singularly unsuccessful in getting at criminals!"'

A member of the Raad moved then 'that the Detective Force of the Republic be put under the direct personal control of the State Attorney'.

The activity of the Third Raad at this point may be imagined.

Kruger himself was not wholeheartedly behind Smuts. 'The President wants to do his best,' Sir Percy Fitzpatrick reports Smuts as saying to him, 'but you have to remember

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that there are a number of people who are hangers-on and who have personal interests to serve of which he knows nothing, and there are times when they make it difficult to carry out what we all know ought to be done.'

The motion, however, was carried. For a year, for less than a year, a new stern administration prevailed in the law services of the Republic. And then there was war and the Republic ended.

In the very month (November 1898) in which the detective forces were put under Smuts' direct control he encouraged Kruger to take his strongest action yet against the Uitlanders. There was a debate in the Raad on the liability of all white men to serve on commando. To serve on commando was the final test of burghership to Kruger. Now in the Raad it was declared that not only did the Uitlanders refuse to serve, they refused even to contribute to the war funds. 'They refused?' said Smuts in effect to the Raad. 'Let us see. Let us pass a law compelling Uitlanders, who will not fight, to pay.' . . . The law was passed. 'There is a certain bland independence about Mr. Smuts' argument', said the historic *Cape Times*, 'which would amount to insolence if it were not merely amusing.'

Milner, in England now, talking with Chamberlain, thought that bland independence—not amusing.

Sir William Butler, on the other hand, the acting Governor and High Commissioner during Milner's absence in England, thought Milner's actions—not amusing. He enquired what Milner was doing there in England and the reply, he says, struck him as 'strange . . . ambiguous, if not unreal'.

He recalled then that already, eighteen months ago, his opinion had been asked about a new military station in Natal to which cavalry, artillery and infantry reinforcements were to be sent from India and England. He guessed

(wrongly) that Rhodes was behind the whole business: 'the will of one man, acting, through a number of subordinate agencies . . . to bring the Government ship into stormy weather by embittering the relations between races, and taking advantage of every passing incident to produce, maintain and increase unrest, suspicion and discontent.'

A few days after writing these words he saw Rhodes. 'Our eyes met for an instant. . . . The expression of his face struck me as one of peculiar mental pain.'

That expression was also one of peculiar physical pain. Rhodes was suffering and he was dying. As for the Transvaal: 'I made a mistake there,' he said with a sincerity it is hard to question. 'And that is enough for me. . . . I keep aloof from the whole Transvaal crisis, so that no one will be able to say, if things go wrong, "Rhodes is in it again." . . . If I were dead to-morrow the same thing would go on.'

The truth was that Butler hated Rhodes, the Raiders, the Uitlanders, Chamberlain and Milner with one grand enveloping emotion. He was taking Milner's place as Governor and High Commissioner. It fell to him, presently, as commander-in-chief of the British forces in South Africa, to organise for war. He was utterly against Milner's policy, he was utterly against war, he was utterly for the Boers. This was, in fact, the one amusing thing about the whole situation—'comical', Butler himself called it. The British commander-in-chief, as Milner wrote in a letter, was 'a violent Krugerite!!!!!!'

'I envy you only,' Butler said to Milner, when Milner returned to South Africa from England, 'I envy you only the books in your library.'

Chapter X

THE UITLANDERS APPEAL TO HER MAJESTY

I

When Milner, having arranged this and that with Chamberlain, returned from England in February 1899, he found Johannesburg in a ferment about something which quite overshadowed Smuts' legislation concerning the war funds. A man called Edgar, insulted by a neighbour, had knocked him senseless; an alarum of murder had arisen; four policemen had followed Edgar to his room, and the foremost of them, in self-defence (as the policemen said), had shot Edgar dead.

The matter came to court. The policeman was arrested on a charge of manslaughter and released on sureties of £200. Smuts immediately ordered the re-arrest of the policeman on a charge of murder. The public prosecutor who had first released the policeman reduced the charge to one of manslaughter as before. The judge was a man of twenty-four whose judgeship had been given him—against even Kruger's wishes—as 'a son of the soil'. The policeman's name happened to be Jones, but he was, for all that, preponderantly Dutch (the Dutch Joneses pronounce their name Yo-ness). The jury acquitted the policeman and the judge approved their verdict.

The Uitlanders did not. The Edgar case was cried up and down the Reef as final evidence of their wretched condition. This was not a mere matter of wickedness against

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Cape Boys (half-castes) and British Indians. It was not even a matter of conscienceless legislation. It had to do with the body of a Briton.

A petition, historically important because it was the first appeal for intervention, was sent to the British Government through Butler, and, on his advice, rejected. A new petition, signed by nearly twenty-two thousand Uitlanders, awaited Milner on his return from England.

Twenty-three thousand Uitlanders signed a counter-petition in favour of the Government.

2

This is what the petition of the Uitlanders said:

'The condition of Your Majesty's subjects in this state has become well-nigh intolerable. The acknowledged and admitted grievances, of which your Majesty's subjects complained prior to 1895, not only are not redressed, but exist to-day in an aggravated form. They are still deprived of all political rights, they are denied any voice in the government of the country, they are taxed far above the requirements of the country, the revenue of which is misapplied and devoted to objects which keep alive a continuous and well-founded feeling of irritation without in any way advancing the interests of the State. Maladministration and peculation of public moneys go hand in hand without any vigorous measures being adopted to put a stop to the scandal. The education of the Uitlander children is made subject to impossible conditions. The police afford no adequate protection to the lives and properties of the inhabitants of Johannesburg; they are rather a source of danger to the peace and safety of the Uitlander population.'

In short, the petitioners begged Her Majesty as once, in similar terms and literary style, they had begged Jameson, to come to their assistance.

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What was Her Majesty to do? While Milner was writing: 'If grievances are removed, agitation, and especially in a busy community like Johannesburg, which only wants to make money in peace, will cease of itself—there, in the Colonial Office, lay Butler's cable: 'It is easy enough to see that the present agitation is a prepared business. . . . The objects sought are, first, political and financial effect in London; second, to make government in Johannesburg impossible; third, to cast discredit upon the ministry now in office here.'

Well, was Milner's opinion to be accepted, or Butler's?

For the time being, neither. England had not merely the Uitlanders to think about when she thought about the Transvaal, and she was not going to be harried and hurried into a war. If the Boers remembered the possibility of continental interference, so did she.

The Uitlanders, the Uitlander Council, the South African League, concentrated on Milner.

3

If ever there was a being unfitted to this atmosphere of doubt, intrigue, bitterness and recrimination, it was Milner. He was a man not only of reputation, but of sensitive mind and delicate taste—a scholar and a solitary. He was a man who wanted to come near his fellow men and couldn't, who poured his heart out in letters and diaries because he couldn't. He was now all the time negotiating with the Boers, and he saw in them only shiftiness, and they saw in him only wickedness. If Rhodes had not been ruined by the Raid, he could have got at the Boers for Milner—he always had been able to get at the Boers. He thought himself that the troubles might be solved if only he and Kruger could meet. But he knew in the same breath that such a solution was impossible—he and Kruger couldn't meet. 'We are not broad enough,' he sighed.

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Yet, if not Rhodes, there was Smuts: a British subject by birth, recently from Cambridge, temporarily against England, yet full of English thought, in touch with Kruger—no less than Rhodes a dealer by disposition. Why could not Milner establish community with Smuts?

The truth is that he wanted to, but could not. He believed, as he cabled to Chamberlain, that Smuts was genuine. 'I am inclined to think', he wrote, 'that Smuts at any rate has made up his mind that mere promises and sham concessions are no good any longer, and that it is policy to give something substantial.' . . . 'I rather wish', he wrote again, 'I could get hold of Smuts just now. I still believe I could do something with him. Is there any possibility of his coming down "to tell me what he thinks of my style of correspondence" or for any other reason?' Even while Smuts was resenting Milner's contemptuous treatment of him at the Bloemfontein Conference, Milner was making a note about 'Kruger's brilliant State Attorney'.

He wanted (he puts it with that awkward attempt at breeziness which is a very revelation of shyness), he did want to get to Smuts, but he could not declare himself. And if he could not get to Smuts, how was he ever to get to any other Boer?

He never did. The months passed and Milner grew more and more suspicious, aloof, bitter, hostile. He came to a stage where the Boers seemed to him the enemies of all he was and stood for. He came to the next stage where he had to link himself with those who were the enemies of the enemies of all he was and stood for. He came to the final stage where a bad end was better than no end to this business that was beating on his taut and jarring nerves.

At this stage he remained. He encased his perturbation in a manner of ice.

Chapter XI

WHO MADE THE BOER WAR?

I

In the month war broke out between England and the Boer Republics Chamberlain said in the House of Commons: 'I hoped for peace. I strove for peace . . .' but there were few who accepted his words. On the Continent and also in South Africa the Boer War was held to be Chamberlain's war. It was called 'Chamberlain's war'.

The evidence that has lately come forward supports Chamberlain. It shows that the war was just one man's war: Milner's. It was this one man's passion that turned history. Milner believed in England. That people who could possibly call themselves English should reject the boon seemed to him offensive to the point of perversity. His reception of an assurance from some Cape Boers that they were loyal is historic: 'Of course you are loyal. It would be monstrous if you were not.' He believed what he believed until he swayed non-believers. He believed that for England's pride and South Africa's future, in reason's name, whatever the sorrow, forget the risk—for principle's sake and not for lack of principle, the Transvaal and all South Africa had to go to England. He felt about the Transvaal like an artist planning a glorious city and an obstinate ancient in a defective, old-fashioned, cherished house stands in the way. What he said was that the inhabitants of the house were in danger because of its bad construction. But his deeper thought was

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that he could allow no individual, right or wrong, to hinder his dream.

Well, the Boers to-day control more of South Africa than they would but for the Boer War, and many of them therefore think that the Lord has, after all, despite what seemed immediate neglect, helped them to vengeance. There are Englishmen, on the other hand, who say that if England had not given the Boers responsible government after the Boer War, the Boers would not to-day have this vengeance for which they bless the Lord. These Englishmen attribute the position, not to Eternal justice, but to Liberal softness. They say that every time England has been liberal to a conquered people she has lost by it. . . .

It may be, of course, that national generosity is often compelled and that therefore neither praise nor blame attaches to its manifestation. It may be, on the other hand, that governments, like individuals, must do what is right, and damn, as Milner said, the consequences. The difficulty is to know what is right. Is it not one of the tragedies of the passing years how often the idealists prove to be wrong and the reactionaries right? How the very idealists in their turn come to say 'idealism is this, but experience is that', and themselves go in that direction which will duly lead to the reactionary camp they once despised?

Smuts says that if Campbell-Bannerman had not given the Boers responsible government so soon after the Boer War there would never have been peace in South Africa, and when the Great War came the Boers would have taken their opportunity for revenge, and a terrible position would then have arisen for England. He admits, however, that the amity he had hoped might come in five years has not come in thirty, and there are Englishmen in South Africa who think they can meet the question of what would have happened in 1914 if the Boers had been less liberally treated,

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and they say that the Boers have in effect won the Boer War to-day, and that Milner was right when he deprecated England's idea that 'you had only to give away your friends to please your enemies to make the latter love you', and that Milner's policy was never given a chance.

Milner's policy indeed went far beyond the grievances of the Uitlanders. Had the grievances of the Uitlanders been his only consideration, he need not have pressed forward so urgently. Kruger was an old man—seventy-four. He had come near to losing office before the Raid, and though the Raid had ensured him an enormous majority at his next election, it was, in fact, as much as he could do now to control the reformers among his own people. He was going downhill again. Any year was his last as President, and a more liberal rule would have followed him—within a few years Smuts himself might have been President.

Chamberlain saw this. He warned Milner that Kruger's rule must, before many years, come to an end; that to attack the Transvaal would cause racial trouble in the Cape, that England was already in a false position through the Raid; that 'a war with the Transvaal, unless upon the utmost and clearest provocation, would be extremely unpopular in England'; that it was better to 'endure a great deal rather than provoke a conflict'; that 'our greatest interest in South Africa is peace and that all our policy must be directed to this object'. Not only Chamberlain, but practically the whole British Cabinet thought so. Milner did not agree. His pride would not let him agree. 'We have put our foot down and we must keep it there. . . .' 'It is no use being conciliatory if people think you are only conciliatory because you are afraid. . . .' 'They will collapse if we don't weaken, or rather, if we go on steadily turning the screw. . . .' 'The big expedition which would be so costly is

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necessary to get Kruger on his knees with or without fighting. . . .

The story of 1898 and 1899 is one of Milner's turning the screw not only on Kruger but on Chamberlain (and the reluctant British Cabinet and the puzzled British people, who really never knew what the war was about), and in the end he had his way and he brought them to war.

Milner wanted, not comfort in the Transvaal, but the Transvaal. How could any reform satisfy him? Imagine the old man in the old interfering house telling the grand town-planner that he would run it ever so sweetly if only he were left alone. Left alone—to do what? To spoil a grand conception! How could Milner in his heart be satisfied with a more liberal régime in the Transvaal? What a nuisance indeed he would have found a docile President eagerly offering reforms! How it would have irritated him to see an Uitlander population quite contented under the Boers (under the Boers!), to have had to cable about 'fleshpots' instead of 'helots'.

'There is no ultimate way out of the political troubles of South Africa', he told Chamberlain, 'except reform in the Transvaal or war. And at present the chances of reform in the Transvaal are worse than ever. . . . I should be inclined to work up to a crisis.'

He could not even bear to wait for the crisis, he found it too hard 'in view of the aggressive and insolent temper of the Transvaal to pass the time without a quarrel and yet without too conspicuously eating humble pie'. If he was turning the screw on Kruger and Chamberlain, he was no less torturing himself. The vitriol he was 'afraid to put . . . into public despatches' he allowed to corrode his own soul. He brooded over 'our impotence'. He dreamt of The Day. 'I always assume that the time will come and must come, otherwise life would be unbearable.' His long cable to

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Chamberlain about the shame to England of 'the spectacle of thousands of British subjects kept permanently in the position of helots and the Boer intrigues for a republic embracing all South Africa' declared his proper convictions. His exhortation that 'the right of Great Britain to intervene to secure fair treatment of the Uitlanders is fully equal to her supreme interest in securing it' logically followed. How many people are there in the world with a genuine belief? What is there more powerful? Even an absurd genuine belief is powerful. The whole British Cabinet, from Salisbury downward, succumbed to the helot cable and warned Kruger that they could not 'permanently ignore the exceptional and arbitrary treatment to which their fellow countrymen and others are exposed'.

'If only', says Smuts, 'Chamberlain had visited South Africa in 1898 instead of in 1903, and been able to depend on his own eyes instead of Milner's, there might never have been a war in South Africa. He had no idea what sort of people the Boers were. When he came to South Africa after the war he was surprised, I could see he was surprised. He found we were not monsters ("They are armed to the teeth and their heart is black," wrote Milner to Chamberlain), not monsters, but gentlemen—ruined gentlemen—who did not whine but accepted our fate with dignity. We were at our best in those days. I am sure Chamberlain preferred us to the Uitlanders.'

2

The way Milner turned the screw on the Boers was to make increasing demands on them—chiefly about the franchise and the dynamite monopoly, and his passion was a third-degree light in the eyes that compelled Chamberlain's acquiescence.

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There were times when dynamite seemed actually more important than franchise. Not even 'a liberal measure of franchise', Milner told Hofmeyr in the middle of 1899, 'would get us into smooth waters unless the dynamite scandals could be got rid of.' 'The questions he put to Kruger at the Bloemfontein Conference', says Butler, 'resembled the queries of an advocate in the interests of a rival dynamite syndicate.' Right into the war the talk went on about dynamite. And why? What significance had this one industry that it could play a leading part in the fate of the British Empire?

Its meaning to the mining houses was obvious. It cost them £600,000 a year more to buy dynamite from a monopoly in the Transvaal than to import it from England. Its meaning to Kruger was this—that to keep the monopoly under his eye and in his gift, to have dynamite made in the Transvaal, not only protected a South African industry, but gave him an essential hold over the mines and prevented also that essential hold passing to England.

And as for Milner (dragging after him Chamberlain)? Well, dynamite was as good a way of applying the screw as any other, and it was apparent by 1899 that they could do so at their will. Europe would not interfere. Kruger's policy was ruining gold shares and Kruger's emissary had just returned from a most depressing pilgrimage overseas. 'The South African Republic', wrote Milner, 'has now not only England but all the great financial interests on the Continent against it.' . . .

He spoke accordingly about a Boer 'climb-down'. A diplomatic offensive, backed by a strong show of material force, would, he said, ensure that climb-down. 'It is twenty to one. And if no climb-down, better fight now than in five or ten years when the Transvaal is stronger and more hostile.'

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'The Boers and their sympathisers', he assured Chamberlain, 'have never been in such a funk for years.'

3

One might call it funk. The younger men like Smuts (first passion past) were telling Kruger to yield something and yet something more and something more again if he did not wish to yield everything. 'We ourselves,' says Smuts, 'the people who thought as I did, were always negotiating, always exploring, sometimes with Kruger's knowledge and sometimes without, trying to find a way of peace. We had to struggle not only against Milner but also against our own war party.'

From the Cape came similar advice to caution. Merriman, the Balfour of Cape politics, begged Kruger to 'concede some colourable measure of reform, not so much in the interests of outsiders as in those of his own state. . . .' 'This is a time', wired Hofmeyr, 'for putting oil on stormy waters and not on fire. Do not delay. . . .' 'I understand', he wired later, 'who would rejoice if dynamite and other reforms remained unsettled. Do not let us play the game of our opponents.'

Kruger replied to all the advice that whatever he yielded he would, in the end, have to yield everything; and he preferred therefore, as always, to resist advancing fate.

He now, as Milner said, defied Her Majesty's Government by declaring that the South African Republic's 'right to self-government was not derived from either the Convention of 1881 or that of 1884, but simple and solely follows from the inherent right of the Republic as a sovereign international state'. He had Uitlanders arrested for a conspiracy to raise a force against the Republic. He instructed his burghers not to leave the Republic. He appealed to the Cape and Free State to help him avert war. The Cape and

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Free State suggested as a means of doing so a conference at Bloemfontein between Milner and Kruger. A conference fell in with Chamberlain's own ideas. And on May 29th, Kruger, with Smuts and two others, journeyed to Bloemfontein and there began those negotiations which ended when Kruger pleaded, all hope abandoned: 'It is not the franchise, it is my country that you want.'

Chapter XII

'FLYING FOX WON THE DERBY'

I

Milner had asked Chamberlain what line he should take at the Bloemfontein Conference, and Chamberlain had suggested franchise after five years and an increase from two to five members in the Raad from the mining areas. The matter of franchise apart, he left him a free hand, but franchise, he said, was the fundamental essential reform.

Milner therefore came to Bloemfontein prepared to discuss just one thing: the franchise. Not what he was prepared to give. Only what he was prepared to take.

Kruger came prepared to discuss a hundred things: things Milner knew about, things he did not know about. The Bloemfontein Conference was his last opportunity to declare all his complaints, hopes and demands, to exchange thoughts, to explore and to offer. He came, in short, to deal, to do the one thing Milner found thoroughly repulsive—to bargain, to make, as Milner called it, a 'Kaffir bargain'.

Behind everything each felt it did not really signify what the other said. Milner wanted to hear the conclusion of the whole matter—he wanted the Transvaal, and Kruger knew it.

So they met. This was the atmosphere at the Bloemfontein Conference, these the protagonists: a proud, nerve-

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ridden, impatient, bitterly set man; and an aged man, desperate, overborne, and struggling against a temper no less bitterly set.

They did not live in the same millennium of thought. They spoke the same language neither figuratively nor literally. A member of the Orange Free State executive interpreted who made no pretence of being impartial.

The conversations hacked their way through tangles of suspicions towards a misty nothingness. Milner spoke about franchise and Kruger spoke about other things. Except for one whole afternoon devoted to dynamite, Milner continued to speak about franchise and Kruger continued to speak about other things.

Milner demanded an immediate and reasonable franchise, and Kruger's counter-offer struck him as 'plausible but deceptive'. Milner said Kruger's form of oath left the Uitlanders, while they waited for burghership, without any nationality, and Kruger said these Uitlanders didn't want burghership and to fight for the Republic, they didn't want the franchise at all: the franchise was only 'a pretext to egg on people with Her Majesty'.

Milner pointed out that twenty-two thousand Uitlanders had signed a petition against Kruger's Government. Kruger suddenly produced a petition signed by twenty-three thousand Uitlanders—with twenty-three thousand affidavits—in favour of his Government.

They came to the serious matter of war preparations. British troops, said Kruger, were arriving at the Cape and being mobilised in Natal. Milner denied it. On the contrary, it was the burghers, he said, who were arming. 'It is my country that you want,' Kruger broke down; 'it is our independence you are taking away—our independence, our independence' he reiterated until Milner, taut with strain, sharply stopped him: 'Don't let us talk about independence

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every minute. I assure the President that I don't want to take away his independence.'

They were, as ever, on the matter of franchise, and Kruger, still trying to make some bargain, was claiming Swaziland and an indemnity for the Jameson Raid, when a telegram was brought to Milner that lightened the atmosphere. He smiled and handed the message to his staff and they smiled too. What could give men, at so troubled a moment, this spontaneous happiness? The simple news that Flying Fox had won the Derby.

The third day of the talks arrived: the franchise, arbitration, Swaziland, the Raid—again Kruger's claims and grievances—levers for a deal. Would the President never understand, said Milner, that he was prepared now to discuss just one question, that on this question—the franchise—he had laid down his terms, that these terms were take-it-or-leave-it terms, and that he was not, positively was not, bargaining?

Behind the scenes Smuts was urging concessions on Kruger. Telegrams came from the Cape urging concessions. In the afternoon, a surprise for Milner—a complete Reform Bill, drafted by Smuts—its chief point franchise after seven instead of fourteen years. 'I think', wrote Hofmeyr from the Cape, 'I think Kruger displayed an unexpectedly liberal spirit at the Bloemfontein Conference. I am sure he would have done a great deal more if he had been encouraged by the other side.'

He was not encouraged by the other side. Milner looked at the Reform Bill compelled from Kruger by his young men—at the document handed to him that Kruger himself could not read—and said coldly that if it were not considerably improved he must break off negotiations. He would take nothing less, he meant, than his demands. Yield more, yield more, Smuts begged Kruger that night. And

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next morning Kruger yielded more. He sprang forward as something accidentally omitted an idea about new electoral divisions which only yesterday Milner had proposed and he himself had rejected.

He was losing grip. He had forgotten. The talk trickled on a while longer, but passion was gathering in Kruger behind his mechanical words. It was the end. Even in the act of bargaining, even while never ceasing to bargain, he declared abruptly that he would yield nothing more: 'I understand from His Excellency's arguments that if I do not give the whole management of my land and government to strangers, there is nothing to be done. . . . I am not ready to hand over my country to strangers.'

Milner's retort was to announce the conference 'absolutely at an end'.

If England had had, at the Bloemfontein Conference, said John Morley, 'an able negotiator, a man accustomed to bargain and give and take, he would have given President Kruger plenty of time to smoke his long china pipe and war might have been avoided'.

Kruger himself said that there was little essential difference between what Milner demanded and he offered. Milner demanded: five-year franchise, increased representation, alteration in the naturalisation oath. He offered: naturalisation after two years and then a five-year franchise, increased representation, a naturalisation oath similar to that in the Orange Free State.

The truth, of course, is that Milner did not want to avoid war. How could he rebuild without first pulling down?

A few hours after the conference he got a message from Chamberlain urging delay, and he wrote then regretting the premature ending of the conference. 'Perhaps extreme fatigue had something to do with it.' Nevertheless he comforted Chamberlain. Though the beginnings of war were

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unpleasant, he wrote, the result here was not doubtful 'or the ultimate difficulty, when once we have cleansed the Augean stable, at all serious. . . . We are in the presence of an opportunity that may never recur.'

From Rhodesia, London and the High Commissioner's office, Butler, the commander-in-chief, began to get letters and telegrams about war.

2

The messages Butler got from Rhodesia, from London, from Milner, had to do, in the first instance, with a certain plan. In the second week of June, a document dated before the Bloemfontein Conference and sponsored by the imperial officer in the Chartered Company's service, was sent to Butler through Milner's secretary. A week later a letter arrived from London echoing it. Then Milner himself came into the picture. The Rhodesian document, the London letter, Milner, all had the same great idea. And what was this great idea? Nothing less than to repeat, in the event of war (and, perhaps, Butler feared, failing war), the Jameson Raid as part of a scheme Milner had to encircle the Transvaal. Quite a small body of raiders, duly armed by Britain, were to descend from Rhodesia upon a Transvaal already ringed about by British troops, surprise Pretoria—and so an end.

Butler had put the original communication aside 'as a thing too silly for official language to deal with calmly'. He told Milner now that, as he had no instructions from the Secretary of State for War, he would do nothing without the High Commissioner's orders in writing. He did not wish, he said, to hear afterwards that by his action and foolish disregard of facts he had precipitated a conflict before England was prepared for it, perhaps brought on a war when the home authorities desired peace.

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Milner scornfully reassured him. 'It can never be said, Sir William Butler, that *you* precipitated a conflict with the Boers.' 'I understand your meaning', Butler replied. He added: 'There can be no further use in my continuing the interview.'

Milner felt that he agreed with him. He would rather, he felt, hand over the High Commissionership to Butler than 'knuckle down' to him. His whole life was, in these days, a process of refusing to knuckle down to people. If there was one thing needed to enforce Milner's determination to bear England's honour proudly on his thin, lonely shoulders, it was the fact that his commander-in-chief was shamelessly, with a maddening politeness, 'nothing to get hold of'—'no interference even'—on the other side.

He had to comfort himself with the thought that 'loyal British South Africa has risen from its long degradation and stands behind me to a man', and with the conviction of his own crucified righteousness. He was prepared to suffer, he said, attacks and howls. 'England may give us away—probably will—not from cowardice but from simple ignorance of the situation and the easy-going belief that you have only to be kind and patient and magnanimous and give away your friends to please your enemies to make the latter love you.' There was only one issue now, he replied to Lord Selborne's message that the idea of war was 'very distasteful to most people': 'Is British paramountcy to be indicated or let slide?' He had (if the terms of Emily Brontë's mysticism may be used) with his inward essence . . . measured the gulf, stooped and dared the final bound, he was at the point where exaltation is just—just—to be resolved, when suddenly the check, the agony of interruption. . . .

Chamberlain, brought, after two years, to the very brink of war, had lit on an opportunity to escape. One morning in July *The Times* printed a report from its Pretoria corre-

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spondent that the Volksraad was about to pass a seven-year retrospective franchise 'without vexatious restrictions', and five Raad seats; and Chamberlain cabled Milner his congratulations on a great victory. 'No one', he breathed with relief, 'would dream of fighting over two years in the qualification period.' He suggested, as a way of winding up the affair, a Joint Commission of Inquiry into the franchise as a whole and a personal conference between Milner and Kruger to settle the remaining issues.

Could one imagine it? After all the talk and trouble, waiving the 'irreducible minimum' of five years, ignoring the possibility of snares and obstacles, abandoning the Uitlanders, he was prepared to throw away this opportunity that might never again recur and keep the peace.

Milner felt it to be a betrayal not only of himself but of England. He implored Chamberlain—the word is his own—he *implored* Chamberlain not to forsake him.

3

As a matter of fact, the time, in general, was almost past for conferences. If Milner had worked himself up to daring the final bound, so had he to that state worked up many of the Boers. There were Boers who remembered Majuba and who were quite prepared to take the English on again.

The Bloemfontein Conference was hardly over when the Dutch Reformed Synod in the Cape sent a petition to the Queen pleading that the difference between Kruger's and Milner's proposals 'could not justify the terrors of war'. But simultaneously the two republics began to order arms from Germany. During July and August, even while peace-makers from the Cape were warning Kruger against hoping for help from them, cartridges came to the Transvaal not only through Portuguese territory but through the Cape itself. Boer generals, famous leaders in Kaffir wars,

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with no idea of European machines or methods, supported Kruger in resisting further concessions and persuaded him to war. Transvaal burghers asked Free State burghers if they were coming in with them. Kruger's State Secretary, F. W. Reitz, ordered his son Deneys up from Bloemfontein to Pretoria, for war with England, he said, seemed inevitable. 'Already', writes Deneys Reitz, 'the Transvaal capital was an armed camp. Batteries of artillery paraded the streets, commandos from the country districts rode through town almost daily, bound for the Natal border, and the crack of rifles echoed from the surrounding hills where hundreds of men were having target practice. Crowded trains left for the coast with refugees flying from the coming storm, and business was at a standstill.

'Looking back, I think that war was inevitable. I have no doubt the British Government had made up its mind to force the issue and was the chief culprit, but the Transvaalers were also spoiling for a fight and from what I saw in Pretoria during the few weeks that preceded the ultimatum, I feel sure that the Boers would in any case have insisted on a rupture.'

Chapter XIII

SMUTS TRIES TO PREVENT WAR

I

If there was one man who was not, in Colonel Reitz' words, spoiling for a fight, and had no desire for a rupture, it was Smuts. They said of Smuts in those days—the Dutch said it—that if something were still needed finally to ensure the coming of war it was Smuts' overeagerness for peace.

He was in 1899 what he has remained throughout life, a natural negotiator, a believer in conference, a Plato man, a peace-at-any-price man. All his principles ('though I wonder', he says, 'what instinct made me join the Stellenbosch volunteers') were against war. He had never had a chance to prove if he possessed the thing called courage. He could not imagine killing. He was—he thought he was—he seemed to be—a student and not a man of action. He realised the Boers' littleness and their faint hopes against England.

He determined now (he was just twenty-nine) to try himself to stop the coming of war. People who understand these things say his effort was the most significant one in all the years of negotiation. He decided to approach the British agent at Pretoria, Conyngham Greene.

2

They met early in July, two days after Milner had written in his diary: 'It looks very like Armageddon to-day', a day

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before Butler sent in his resignation. Their conversations were informal and Smuts asked Greene why Chamberlain was so insistent about the suzerainty. If only, he said, Chamberlain would give up England's claim to suzerainty, all other difficulties could be settled: franchise, language, representation, perhaps even the right to vote for President and Commandant-General. It would not surprise him, he said, to see, in the course of years, an Englishman President of the South African Republic.

They met several times again and then significantly towards the middle of August, when Smuts came to ask Greene if Milner would be satisfied with the Bloemfontein terms. Greene, speaking for himself, thought not, but Smuts asked him, why not? How had the position of the Uitlanders changed since the Bloemfontein Conference that the terms suggested then were no longer good enough? And if they were no longer good enough what did it suggest but that England was deliberately provoking a war?

He returned to the attack next evening, for a friend had told him that Greene was, after all, wavering towards an impulse to discuss the Bloemfontein terms. He suggested to Greene now that if only England were not so insistent on the suzerainty, the Boers would readily, for their part, make concessions. He went on: Could not England be satisfied to call herself the paramount Power in South Africa as she had done before ever there was this talk about suzerainty and as, considering her great interests, she fairly might continue to do? What now did she want with this suzerainty—historically and legally baseless, grievous to the Boers, and, if he might say so, pure nonsense?

Greene and Smuts had discussions then about suzerainty, franchise, representation, arbitration, language and all the other points of difference. There were, eventually, serious disputes between Greene and Smuts as to what exactly had

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happened at these meetings. Each said he had immediately afterwards made notes, and each proved that the other was wrong. But Greene, Smuts admits, was quite sincerely and innocently working for peace. He had no idea that he was not supposed to make peace.

Certainly Milner did not expect Greene to take it on himself to make peace. 'Nothing but confusion can arise', he said, 'from this irregular method of negotiation,' and he warned Greene against committing himself, and Chamberlain against holding England committed.

The letter in which Greene describes to Milner how he came eventually to transmit his compromise with Smuts of 'a five-year franchise, eight new seats for the Goldfields, a simple franchise law and other advantages' (as he shortly puts it) in return for the withdrawal of the demand of Her Majesty's Government for a Joint Inquiry, and for certain other assurances in the matter of suzerainty, non-interference in the internal affairs of the Republic, and arbitration—the apologetic tone of the letter clearly attests Greene's embarrassment at finding himself in the false role of peace-maker. 'It was the first time', he explains his weakness, 'in my whole experience of diplomatic work here that the Government of the South African Republic had ever *approached* Her Majesty's Government. Up till now our diplomatic intercourse had consisted of an interminable interchange of recriminating correspondence. . . .' Greene may have felt this stiff-neckedness to be morally the attitude of the Boers. But it is not literally accurate that Greene's intercourse with Smuts, at any rate, had hitherto been merely by 'recriminating correspondence'. The official records show otherwise.

It seems really as if Greene had succumbed to that hypnotically reasonable manner of Smuts' which, to this day, persuades people to act as *he* thinks right, and even some-

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times against their own interests. That manner does not at all resemble the revivalist or Führer manner. The unthinking can withstand it. It does not influence the vulgar. A certain quality, a certain standard of mind and emotion, is needed in the person who yields to Smuts. 'I felt', pursues the embarrassingly virtuous Greene, 'that so long as I was here in a diplomatic capacity, as Her Majesty's agent, it could only be the earnest desire of Her Majesty's Government that I should leave no stone unturned to fairly consider any advance, however unpromising, on the part of the Government of the South African Republic, and neglect no opportunity of endeavouring to arrive at a peaceful solution of the difficulty.'

3

The arrangement between Greene and Smuts was that if both the Transvaal Executive and the British Cabinet approved of Smuts' proposals they were to be submitted formally. The Transvaal Executive approved next day, and Greene drafted a telegram to his Government which Smuts initialled. He sent also another telegram setting out their various conversations and the numerous suggestions he had himself made to Smuts.

It has been said that Chamberlain read the two telegrams as successive sheets of a single message and that his satisfaction with the idea of receiving a formal proposal on the lines of Smuts' proposal was based on this mistake. As, however, the first telegram ends with the words: 'A second explanatory telegram follows this', and the second telegram reads like nothing but an explanatory telegram, and Chamberlain did not even receive it at the same time and place as the first telegram, it is hard to understand how he could have replied to the two telegrams as if they were part of the same offer. It seems more likely that when Milner got

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Chamberlain's reply telling him to be as conciliatory as Greene and saying, 'If proposals made through British agent are duly authorised they evidently constitute an immense concession and even a considerable advance on your Bloemfontein proposals'—it certainly seems strongly probable that Milner instructed Chamberlain to be rather less pleased and acquiescent than he was showing himself.

Whatever the cause, the result of their conflicting impulses was the following response from Milner, which Greene showed Smuts: 'If the South African Republic Government should reply to the invitation to a Joint Inquiry put forward by Her Majesty's Government by formally making the proposals described in your telegram, such a course would not be regarded by Her Majesty's Government as a refusal of their offer, but they would be prepared to consider the reply of the South African Republic Government on its merits.'

Smuts read Milner's telegram. He read it, he says in his official note, repeatedly, but he could not understand it. 'Consider reply on its merits.' 'Not as refusal of offer. . . . ' Offer of what? Of a Joint Inquiry? But his proposals, said Smuts to Greene, were specifically conditional on Her Majesty's Government *not* pressing their demand for a Joint Inquiry. It was the preliminary clause to the whole offer. What in that confused sentence from Milner was meant by the suggestion that the proposals had nothing to do with the Joint Inquiry?

Greene was not very clear himself, but he told Smuts the Republic ought at once, and in the very terms of Smuts' own proposal (so that there need be no vexatious doubts), to submit an offer to the British Government. He was sure it would be favourably considered, a settlement made and the crisis ended.

Subsequently Milner told Greene 'not to express his

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opinion on the details of the proposals nor to see the note in draft form'. He had the not unjustified impression that Greene was giving a good deal of too spontaneous advice. Smuts, however, could not tell that Greene's advice to him now was not an inspired lead (he went so far even as to say that the Boer proposals 'were induced by suggestions given by the British agent') and on August 19th the Republic submitted to Milner, in terms closely following Smuts' original offer, their formal proposals.

They suggested as an 'alternative proposal' to the Joint Inquiry: a five-year retrospective franchise as proposed by Milner at Bloemfontein; a recommendation to the Volksraad of not less than a quarter of the seats in the First Volksraad, and if necessary in the Second Volksraad; the right of new burghers to vote equally with the old for President and Commandant-General; their readiness to consider the 'friendly suggestions' from the British agent concerning franchise. . . .

These were the first four paragraphs. The fifth paragraph ran: 'In putting forward the above proposals the Government assumes that Her Majesty's Government will agree that the present intervention shall not form a precedent . . . that Her Majesty's Government will not further insist on the assertion of the suzerainty . . . that arbitration (from which foreign elements other than the Orange Free State are to be excluded) will be conceded as soon as the franchise scheme becomes law.'

4

Everything, perhaps, led to the Boer War. The first nugget of gold in the Transvaal. The arrival in South Africa of Dutch, French, Germans, Britons. The ancestors who transmitted to the emigrants their conflicting tendencies. The ancestors of these ancestors. . . . As an immediate mat-

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ter, however, there was a single word in the Boer offer of August 19th, 1899, which influenced history. . . .

It was said, when the French and English came to terms in February 1935, in London, over the safety of Europe, that M. Laval spent an hour considering the word 'but'. The Boers spent the day of August 20th, 1899, considering the word 'assumes'. It was the word Smuts had used in his original proposals, which, no less than the formal proposals, were the considered terms of the Boer Executive. It was probably Smuts' word. It may have been Reitz' word. It was certainly not the word of Kruger, who had too little English to know such a word. It could hardly have been used without consideration. It may have been used in tactfulness, in evasiveness, to avoid peremptoriness, as a manoeuvre, an evocation, a lure, a half-way word between aspiration and insistence. It may have embodied a hope or an expectation.

Greene wrote to Milner that 'the assurances asked by the Government of the South African Republic on the question of suzerainty and non-interference did not amount, as explained to me by the State Attorney, to more than concessions to Boer susceptibilities, they were to be "assumed" by the Transvaal as corollaries to their own proposals but did not, in the original offer, take the form of a definite bargain'. The second sentence, however, is the agent's own interpretation of the first, and Smuts' personal account of it interprets with a difference his allusions to Boer susceptibilities.

The question that exercised the Boers on the Sunday which followed August the 19th was whether the word 'assumes' could possibly be said to mean 'taken for granted'. They wanted it taken for granted that they would not give so much to get nothing at all. They decided, before the day was out, to use a firmer term than the word 'assumes'.

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On Monday the 21st they presented Greene ('The President said that he thought one or two points might have been stated more clearly', wrote Smuts) with a variation in their fifth paragraph. 'In continuation of my despatch of the 19th instant,' wired Reitz, the State Secretary, 'and with reference to the communication to you of the State Attorney this morning, I wish to forward to you the following in explanation thereof, with the request that the same may be telegraphed to His Excellency, the High Commissioner for South Africa, as forming part of the proposals of this Government embodied in the above-mentioned despatch: "The proposals of the Government regarding questions of franchise and representation contained in that despatch must be regarded as expressly conditional on Her Majesty's Government consenting to the points set forth in Paragraph 5 of the despatch, viz. (a) In future not to interfere in internal affairs of the South African Republic; (b) not to insist further on its assertion of existence of suzerainty; (c) to agree to arbitration."'

It has been suggested that something happened between the Saturday and the Monday to stiffen the Boers; that they may have received some favourable news concerning the prospect of European intervention.

No such spectacular thing happened. They spent that Sunday discussing the implications of the word 'assume'. 'We decided', says Smuts, 'that we could not go on any longer with this uncertainty. We were determined to make it clear, once and for all, that unless England abandoned her claims to interfere with us, no agreement had any value. There was, to begin with, the Joint Inquiry, which Milner would not give up. The Joint Inquiry meant an immediate interference with our internal affairs. There was the suzerainty. The suzerainty meant a permanent interference with all our affairs—any sort of interference at any time could

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be worked directly or indirectly through the suzerainty. As long as England had the suzerainty we were not independent. We felt we wanted it absolutely clear that our concessions were contingent on England's giving up her claims to interfere with us. Our first consideration had to be our independence.'

5

Their offer was not yet accepted—the intervening Sunday had to do with the delay—when they changed the indefinite term 'assumes' to the definite term 'expressly conditional'. And when Chamberlain, having received their offer, pointed out a number of other discrepancies between the formal proposals and Smuts' original suggestions (as described in Greene's explanatory telegram), Smuts answered shortly that 'the terms of a settlement embodied in the final note of the 19th August from this Government were very carefully considered, and I do not believe that there is the slightest chance of their being amplified or altered. Your decision will therefore have to be arrived at on the terms as they stand.'

The negotiations dribbled on ('dribbled' is Chamberlain's word for the despairing concessions the Boers did make despite their sudden haughty stand) for nearly another two months, but they had really no chance of settlement. They never had had. Milner was right there, and so was Kruger. They were the only realists. It was as if a man needed to have a number of operations, including one that was almost certainly fatal, and the doctors assured him they could satisfactorily perform the lesser operations. When all the talk, on one side or the other, about franchise, representation, dynamite, corruption, language, injustice, pride and honour was done, there stood the only real issue: suzerainty.

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Here, in brief, is the story of the next two months:

Chamberlain accepted the Boers' concessions and rejected their demands.

The Uitlanders begged for speedy relief and began to depart. Milner told Chamberlain about the loss and suffering of the Uitlanders, and Chamberlain said, 'the loss and suffering by war would be greater still'.

Salisbury made a reference to the Sibylline books, and Hofmeyr, also making a reference to the Sibylline books, wrote to Smuts: 'You gave too much and you asked too much.'

The Boers, deciding then to give less and ask less, reverted to their seven-year franchise, and inquired waveringly about the Joint Inquiry.

Milner said: 'I would not be an Englishman in the Transvaal—not for a million—to live all my life under the heel of such a crew.'

The British, on September 8th, drafted troops from England and India to South Africa; and sent the Boers a despatch which began (so that the clauses following were to the Boers of no interest), 'Her Majesty's Government have absolutely repudiated' the claim of the Transvaal to be a sovereign international state, 'and they are therefore unable to consider any proposal which is made conditional on an acceptance by Her Majesty's Government of these views.'

Rhodes said: 'Kruger will at a final push give anything. Nothing will make Kruger fire a shot.'

Kruger said: 'It is no longer possible to comply with the far-reaching and insolent demands of the British Government.' And he classed as mutineers three members of the Raad who were for peace, and rejected the British offer.

The editor of the *Daily News* suggested Kruger should be sent an interim despatch giving him another chance, and on September 22nd Chamberlain took his advice and here

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is the last clause in the interim despatch that gave Kruger another chance (so that the clauses preceding were to the Boers of no interest):

'The refusal of the Government of the South African Republic to entertain the offer (of September 8th) coming as it does at the end of nearly four months of protracted negotiations, themselves the climax of an agitation extending over a period of more than five years, makes it useless to further pursue a discussion on the lines hitherto followed, and Her Majesty's Government are now compelled to consider the situation afresh and to formulate their own proposals for a final settlement of the issues which have been created in South Africa by the policy constantly followed for many years by the Government of the South African Republic.'

Fifty-seven members of both Houses of the Cape Parliament prayed the Queen not to use 'force or compulsion' against the Republic, and fifty-three members of both Houses of the Cape Parliament 'strongly deprecated' the plea of the fifty-seven.

Kruger quoted to the Raad verse 7 of Psalm 118 : 'The Lord taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me.' But he also seized the railways and closed down the mines, stopped the export of gold, commandeered fifteen pounds from every citizen in the Transvaal, and asked the Free State to mobilise her burghers.

The Cape asked the Free State not to mobilise her burghers.

The Free State mobilised her burghers—British by birth as well as Dutch.

On October 7th the army reservists were called out by Royal Proclamation. On October 8th the Indian troops reached Durban.

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On October 9th Kruger issued his ultimatum, which demanded:

That British troops should be instantly withdrawn from the Republic's borders.

That reinforcements brought to South Africa since June 1st should be withdrawn in a reasonable time.

That troops now on the high seas should not be landed.

An answer was called for before five o'clock next day. The Boers were already on that day celebrating Kruger's birthday in the field.

'They've done it!' said Chamberlain.

Mr. Greene handed in the British reply and asked for his passports.

War began officially on October 11th.

Chapter XIV

'A CENTURY OF WRONG'

1

The war was not yet begun when there was issued from the *Review of Reviews* office, with a preface by W. T. Stead, the English version of a book in pamphlet form called *A Century of Wrong*. The original was in the Dutch of Holland—the official language of the South African Republic—and its title was *Een Eeuw van Onrecht*. No name accompanies the Dutch version, but the English version is 'issued by State Secretary Reitz as the official exposition of the case of the Boer against the Briton'.

Some time passed before the news got round that Smuts was chiefly responsible for *Een Eeuw van Onrecht*, and it is still not generally known that Mrs. Smuts translated it into English.

The book was of that passionate kind which moves people when passion is all about, but which does not read so well when time, reason and expediency have subdued passion.

Four years after the Boer War, Campbell-Bannerman gave the Transvaal responsible government, and England trusted the Boers in the most moving way, and Smuts' feelings towards England became again what they had been in the days when Rhodes noticed him at Stellenbosch, and he regretted then his share in *A Century of Wrong*. But there it

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was (although he never admitted its authorship), perpetually to plague him and perpetually to be used against him. He does not speak of it to-day. He seldom speaks of the things that truly disturb him.

2

When first Smuts accepted England's hand after the war many of his people followed him who found presently that they could not maintain an attitude of amity. These—and their number grew until it included men who had not fought in the Boer War and men who had never been Republicans and men who just wanted something: they knew not what—all these, who formed gradually the greater part of the Boer nation, turned on Smuts and it was one of their greatest delights to taunt him with *A Century of Wrong* and to use against himself his own bitterness against England. To this day Boers exist who think of Smuts as a traitor because, having in the post-war settlement been trusted by England, he persists in justifying his trust. They cannot accept it that he is, as he says, 'a proper Boer, one of themselves. I love them from my heart,' and he knows they cannot, since love them he may, but a 'proper' Boer he never has been and never will be, just as Alexander Hamilton, the greatest of Americans, never was and never could be a 'proper' American.

There was in particular a cartoonist called Boonzaier who got a generation of fun and use out of *A Century of Wrong*. He drew for the Dutch papers (it was one of his constant themes and is to-day) a shifty-looking individual cringing before a gross Semite. The shifty-looking individual was Smuts and the gross Semite was one Hoggenheimer (derived from a character in a musical comedy that came to the Cape early in the century) and the idea was that Smuts had sold himself to Hoggenheimer, who personified the

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gold mines. When Hoggenheimer was not in the picture Smuts was an animal (as Chamberlain in the drawings of F. C. Gould), or he was a down-and-out, or he was just doing something shameful, wicked or ridiculous. Often the pictures showed a monkey chained to a pole. The monkey was called Adonis, which is a common name among the Cape coloured people, and he represented South Africa, and the chain represented the British connection and the pole was Britain. And the freedom Smuts talked about that South Africa had within the British Empire was typified by the freedom the monkey had to run, chained, up and down the pole. It was a witty, if not an accurate, conception, and now and then the drawings in general were amusing. But mostly they were offensive, and if they had any superficial truth they could make a vicious pitfall of a hidden falsehood. And nearly always in the cartoons that showed Smuts betraying the Dutch to the English there lay about somewhere in the picture—very conspicuously—this book *Een Eeuw van Onrecht—A Century of Wrong*.

3

A Century of Wrong is full of those metaphors, classical allusions and bouts of eloquence that were more characteristic of Smuts in his youth than they are to-day.

It sets out the injustice and cruelty of the British from the beginning of the nineteenth century to its end: what the British did to the Boers in the Cape, Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal.

In the Cape, it says, the missionaries supported the natives against them, they were ruined by the emancipation of slaves. They trekked away from England and England pursued them.

In Natal their women threatened—sooner than submit to

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British slavery—to walk barefoot over the Drakensbergen to freedom or death, and England pursued them.

In the Transvaal there were Shepstone’s annexation, capitalism, jingoism, Rhodes, Jameson and suzerainty. As ever, England pursued them.

‘In this awful turning point in the history of South Africa, on the eve of the conflict which threatens to exterminate our people, it behoves us to speak the truth in what may be, perchance, our last message to the world.’

‘Up to the present our people have remained silent; we have been spat upon by the enemy, slandered, harried and treated with every possible mark of disdain and contempt. But our people, with a dignity which reminds the world of a greater and more painful example of suffering, have borne in silence the taunts and derision of their opponents.’

‘Our people have been represented by influential statesmen and on hundreds of platforms in England as incompetent, uncivilised, dishonourable, untrustworthy, etc., etc., so that not only the British public, but nearly the whole world, began to believe that we stood on the same level as the wild beasts. In the face of these taunts and this provocation our people still remained silent.’

‘Our people remained silent’ (comes unfortunately the explanation) ‘partly out of stupidity, partly out of a feeling of despairing helplessness, and partly because, being a pastoral people, they read no newspapers and were thus unaware of the way in which the feeling of the whole world was being prejudiced against them by the efforts of malignant hate.’

‘As the wounded antelope awaits the coming of the lion, the jackal and the vulture, so do our poor people all over South Africa contemplate the approach of the foe.’

‘Every sea in the world is being furrowed by the ships which are conveying British troops from every

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corner of the globe in order to smash this little handful of people. . . .'

But they would not, vows the book, this little handful of people would not, be smashed. They would do to England what little Greece had done to Xerxes. They would withstand Chamberlain as their forefathers had withstood Richelieu, Alva and Louis XIV.

That justice would be done which (as Smuts had already shown in the case of Rhodes) 'proceeds according to Eternal Laws, unmoved by human pride and ambition, and permits the tyrant, in his boundless self-esteem, to climb higher and higher and to gain greater honour and might until he arrives at the appointed height and then falls down into the infinite depths.'

And 'It is ordained', prophesies the book, 'that we, insignificant as we are, should be the first among the people to begin the struggle against the new world tyranny of Capitalism.'

The peroration duly comes, in the words of Kruger in the year of Majuba: 'Then shall it be from the Zambesi to Simon's Bay, Africa for the Africander.'

Chapter XV

LIFE'S GREATEST SATISFACTION

I

It is strange to think that while Smuts was preparing this wild document, vehement with a sense of wrong, he was also arguing in his reasonable and convincing way with the British agent and even disturbing his Dutch friends because he was so set on peace.

Which is the essential Smuts? The Smuts emotional to the point of mysticism who hides himself from the world, or the negotiator whose 'slimness' the world has sometimes distrusted?

There is this about Smuts: he can be a number of things to a number of men and never yield the passionate core within himself. He is inclined in politics to be an opportunist—that is, he follows, in the dictionary definition 'what is presently expedient'—a system which has been the triumph of British government. But he has maintained his greater ideals in a manner beyond belief to anyone who has not followed the whole course of his life. In addition to the idealist and the negotiator, there was now to be revealed a new Smuts: a man of war and action.

2

In the year 1917, a month after joining the War Cabinet, Smuts received a letter from F. S. Oliver, whom he knew as the biographer of Alexander Hamilton and the author of *Ordeal by Battle*. This is part of the letter:

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'Dear Smuts,

'Will you forgive me if I drop the impediment of the title? By rights, perhaps, I should leave the step to you; for you are among the great ones and I am only a grub. On the other hand, I took my degree at Cambridge a year or two before you did, and so I presume on that. . . .

'I wish my lot had been cast to work with you or under you. I almost wish it might have been—failing the other—that I might have worked against you; for there is a satisfaction in feeling something solid when one strikes and not merely air-balloons. . . .

'Intellect is a queer tricky thing. Shrewd knowledge of the facts of life is apt to be a misleading thing. Imagination is a joy to its possessor, but ninety-nine times out of a hundred is a vain thing. Faith, on the other hand, is too often a millstone, rendering its holder immobile and drowning him in self-consciousness. But if you happen on a blend of all four you get something worth having.

'I wonder—if you had to say what thing in your career you took the most "boyish" satisfaction in—how you would state it? . . . When one is on a platform I imagine one takes on to some extent the feeling of one's audience, and is apt to rate highest the things which appeal to most. But if you were examining your own heart without the bother of an audience? . . .'

The most 'boyish' satisfaction. Well, he would say—he has said it without reference to Oliver's letter—that time he spent during the Boer War, harassing, with his few hundred men, the British in the Cape. ('I prefer the active to the passive qualities.') This was his greatest, most constant and purposeful delight: to battle against hunger, cold, rain, men and death. In the Boer War, he says, he knew for the first time comradeship, leadership and the joy of bodily life; he discovered he could be resourceful not only in the field

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of thought but also (though he considers it the same thing) in the field of action. He had coolly ventured his youthful inexperienced wits against Plato, Bacon and Hegel. He found he could venture them not less confidently against the leaders of the British forces. He had, on top of all, nothing but his wits to depend on, and Smuts is happiest when he can make play with his wits. It is the excitement to him that great sport is to other men. It gives him that ecstasy.

He found also—at first it amazed him and then he took it for granted—that he had no bodily fear. How could he have anticipated that, a man inexperienced in danger? He was not the sort to study the look in his own fearless eyes. Men who fought with him say his attitude went beyond recklessness—it was rather a sort of nescience: consideration of tragic result was simply not a part of him. They were for ever having to warn him and to draw him away from dangerous exposed positions.

In his long career he has often had his life menaced (not only as a soldier but also as a public man) and people, both official and friendly, have begged him to take care. He has always received with pleasant indifference both threats and cautions. 'Oh, nothing will happen', he says in his casual way. 'Nothing ever has.'

He was equally surprised to find that he was not shocked by the sight of death in battle. 'I used to wonder', he says, 'how I could face such death. . . . I was not affected. No, I was utterly callous. It amazed me. I could not understand myself. But then I saw the other men were callous too. And they were callous in the Great War. The normal men were callous. The men who were affected by the dead and wounded were the neurotics.

'Afterwards when I read something, or saw something, or was moved by something—something quite different,

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you understand—not at all to do with war—I remembered those bodies, I felt them then.'

Was he really as callous as he imagined? He certainly came out of the war a different man in body from the narrow-chested haggard youth (an inch or two under six feet) who went into it. His own parents did not recognise him. Even the contour of his face was changed. Flesh covered the once protuberant bones. A yellow beard grew from the short square chin and up the cheeks—a narrow white point of it remains. His weight was risen to twelve and a half stone and, to his satisfaction, has stayed at that.

His body therefore seems to bear out what he says concerning his spirit. And perhaps, in general, he did find what Oliver would have called his most 'boyish' satisfaction in that guerrilla fighting during the Boer War; in the physical discovery of himself and the new source of confidence it must have brought him.

But Smuts is a man very divided within (as he admits) and there must have been other moods which he has forgotten. Here, for instance, is an obvious contradiction of his belief that he was indifferent to the sight of death in battle.

'Going over the field after the English retired,' he writes of Spion Kop, 'one saw truly appalling sights. One poor Tommie had his head blown clear off his body. The face lay upwards about a dozen paces away as if it belonged to another body buried with the head above the ground. There was another man sitting with his back against a rock in the act of binding a wound below the knee. He had a bandage in one hand and was winding it around the injured part when shot dead through the heart. He remained in that position until buried. Another man, whose name (marked on his clothes) was found to be Petrie, an aristocratic-looking soldier, lay stretched dead, face upwards, his hands full of grass which he had grasped in the death strug-

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gle. I could not help feeling a wish, as I gazed on these men, of being able to place these three brave Englishmen in Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's bedroom, so that he might see them when retiring to bed some night during the continuance of the conflict which he has promoted. It might bring home to him some idea of the horrors which are associated with this unnatural war between Christian people.'

It seems not unlikely that, whatever may be Smuts' recollection of his callous feelings thirty years ago, there were times when he himself saw not merely fallen Boers but those brave Englishmen he wished might haunt Chamberlain (always Chamberlain). He has a reputation for hardness. But is this hardness a vertical or a horizontal occurrence? Is it that streaks of hardness strike right through him to the bottom, or that he has protective layers of hardness covering, but not inescapably, his essential softness? His devotion to young children is well known. It is even excessive. But that is not in point. It proves nothing. Devotion to children is an agreeable manifestation which may have sources unconnected with softness of heart. Smuts says it is a defect in him that he cannot yield or reveal himself, that he is fundamentally reticent with people. He calls himself a repressed man, though why he should be he cannot say. It may be easier for such a man to yield or reveal himself to children than to mature people. It may be the wistful desire towards youth—just youth—that people get as their own youth goes. One never sees men in their twenties or thirties yearning towards children as they do in their fifties or sixties.

It is more significant that it could happen to Smuts to walk, tortured, about the streets of Pretoria looking for a beggar whom he had refused to help. It is his custom to help beggars. It is his custom to help friends (though, sometimes, with cynicism: 'Are those people just visiting

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or do they want something?' he asks Mrs. Smuts). Smuts knows the world to-day, and the wisdom—the necessity—of not always caring. But his instinct is towards sentimentality, and there still exists in him the shy boy who, at sixteen, wrote to a stranger that he wanted a friend and to avoid wickedness.

Chapter XVI

BOER DREAM

I

No one in the world thought the Boers had any hope against the British except the Boers, and Smuts says to-day they had reasons for their hope.

It was not only on the Lord they relied (though they did rely on the Lord)—they considered history, they had their plans.

Many remembered, to begin with, Majuba. What had happened once could happen again. They compared themselves also with the Americans of the seventeen-seventies. In what way were the Americans better situated for a war against England than the Boers? They were not better situated at all. Where the Boers were a united nation with a century of fighting behind them, well armed with munitions brought in since the Raid, the Americans were in chaos politically and nationally, they had no money, their army consisted of untrained men, small in number, badly armed, under inexperienced officers. Nor was the England of their day less formidable than the England of 1899.

Yet, for the same reasons that the Boers might hope to beat England, the Americans had beaten England: their country too was distant from the reinforcements of England, their land hard to over-run, their plight interesting to envious Europe.

‘When the war began’, said Botha in 1902, ‘we had

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about sixty thousand burghers, and we further relied upon help from the Cape Colony. We expected that the Colony would not allow her railways to be used to convey troops to fight against us. We also hoped that the powers would interfere. . . . We had provisions in abundance, our commandos could be supported for weeks in the same place.' . . . Why then, taking all these things together, should that not happen which had happened in America and the Boers be left to do as they liked in South Africa? . . .

They had, in addition, tactical plans peculiar to their own circumstances. They proposed, says Smuts, to carry on the war in the British colonies—the Cape and Natal. There, with the mountain ranges to fall back upon for defence, they would attack, and the Boers of the Cape would be stimulated to join them, and every British soldier in the Orange Free State and Transvaal would be drawn away in pursuit of them, and their own territories they would preserve inviolate as a base. (There were some who dreamt, at the beginning, of taking Durban, and, at the end, of taking Cape Town.)

In the Transvaal they would do this: they would strike at the very root of evil, the whole origin of the war—the gold mines.

2

It was the opinion of the Boers that the war was a mine-owners' war, a link with the Jameson Raid. What the mine-owners really wanted, the Boers believed, was to get hold of the Transvaal, destroy its obdurate Government, and form their own Republic. The mine-owners had no desire to bring the Transvaal under the British flag: they had said so at the time of the Raid (that they wanted not change but reform); and made trouble with Rhodes because he insisted on the British flag; and even sent envoys to Cape Town to

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tell him that if they had to rise under the British flag they would just as soon not rise at all.

Well, the war was being made for the mine-owners, because of the power of their money, and with it. (So the Boers believed.) And if the mine-owners did not want the war to go on they could make it stop. What, therefore, was the obvious thing to do? What would frighten the mine-owners more than anything and compel them to make peace on the Boers' own terms? A threat, clearly, to destroy the mines. The mine-owners cared nothing for British prestige. They cared only for money. If the Boers threatened the mines, the mine-owners would use all their influence to compel the British Government to end the war. . . .

Yet neither did the Boers threaten to destroy the mines, nor did they destroy them without threatening. It was not that they valued the mines in themselves. For what, as Reitz himself came to say, the State Secretary—a man educated in England and a writer of books—what had the wealth of Johannesburg ever done for the Boers? It would tend to their advantage to be rid of Johannesburg. . . . It was not for fear of personal deprivation they did nothing about the mines, it was merely that they lacked the spirit of destruction. They gave themselves other reasons for not doing it. But that was the real reason.

Seven months, for instance, after the beginning of the war—after all the earlier successes of the Boers had been turned to naught, and the British had relieved Kimberley and Ladysmith and beaten them in battle and refused their offer of peace and relieved Mafeking and, despite the arrival of Kruger himself, taken Bloemfontein and annexed the Free State—even while Roberts' troops were marching through the Transvaal and the Boers were preparing to abandon Johannesburg, they held a meeting about blowing

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up the mines. Surely the time had now come to blow up the mines. . . . And yet the time had precisely not come! They could not destroy property still in their own possession and while their forces were retreating. It would seem an act of wanton revenge. When that same Judge Koch who had presided over the Edgar trial took it on himself to do a bit of private blowing up, Botha himself had him arrested.

A few days later the British took the Rand and were on their way to Pretoria.

3

Both Boers and British had a sentimental feeling about Pretoria. It was the capital. It signified something—many believed the final thing—in the war. The Republic must fall, the British thought, when Pretoria fell. They would fight for Pretoria, the Boers thought, all their forces would be rushed up to fight for Pretoria, and there—appropriately—they would smash the British and send them, in Smuts' words, 'reeling back to the coast'.

Towards the middle of 1900, when the Boers were fleeing before the British advance through the Transvaal, thousands of them, says Smuts, remained with the retreating commandos, stimulated by the one hope of taking part in the great stand at Pretoria.

They did not know that their leaders had already decided to abandon the capital with no more than a show of resistance. Their hope, the leaders realised, was not the fortified towns but the uncharted veld.

One morning, towards the end of May, the rumour got about that the British were on their way to Pretoria and would be there that night. The retreating Boers, who expected to make a decisive stand at their capital, were still beyond Johannesburg, nor could any news be got of them.

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Late in the afternoon the President, the State Secretary and other leading officials removed themselves, and thus their seat of government, to a mountain village called Machadadorp, on the way to Portuguese territory. There, in the railway carriages they had come in, they conducted, as Kruger describes, the affairs of the country: issuing decrees and requisitions, provisos for furlough, orders for the reorganisation of the army and measures to frustrate the enemy—dreaming still of Washington and Valley Forge and their similar hopes.

Then Kruger, because the cold of Machadadorp affected his eyes, descended to a village in the valley below, though the Government remained in Machadadorp until the British annexed the Transvaal. After that it travelled to another village still nearer Portuguese territory and thence Kruger issued his final proclamation: 'Whereas, in the month of October, 1899, an unjust war was forced upon the people of the South African Republic and the Orange Free State by Great Britain. . . .' Whereas he was informed that a proclamation dated September 1st, 1900, announced (while the Boer forces were still in the field and therefore contrary to international law) that the South African Republic was conquered and annexed. . . .

'Now I, Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger, State President of the South African Republic . . . do hereby proclaim in the name of the independent people of this Republic that the aforesaid annexation is not recognised, but is by these presents declared null and void. . . .

'The people of the South African Republic is and remains a free and independent people and refuses to submit to British rule.'

With these words he left South Africa. Because he was too old to accompany his forces in the field, he was given six months' furlough to promote, as he says, the Boer cause

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in Europe. 'His Honour's invaluable services can still be profitably employed in the interests of the land and people. . . .'

The Government of the country that refused to admit itself annexed moved again. . . .

4

When Kruger, with his executive, left Pretoria, Schalk Burger, the Acting President, and Smuts, the State Attorney, stayed behind to keep order in face of the coming attack.

It was Smuts' determination not to yield the town without a blow. He commandeered therefore every available burgher, and, with four or five hundred men, went to intercept the British advance. He went in the direction of Irene, where now he lives on a farm he bought nine years later, at the time of union.

The British were not there. The rumour had been a false one. He returned to Pretoria and presently Schalk Burger went away with his family and Smuts was left alone in charge.

He could not prevent—he did not wish to—the looting of Government stores in broad daylight. There was no purpose in hoarding them for the invaders. However, when a few days later the retreating Boers arrived—those who had come to make their final stand in Pretoria—there was nothing for them to eat. The fight too was out of them by this time, and their leaders held meetings in the telegraph office to communicate to the President the despair of the nation.

From his administrative offices in the railway train at Machadadorp, Kruger consulted with Steyn, the President of the Free State, a fugitive even as himself. Steyn said if the Transvaalers were prepared to lie down the moment

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the British reached their borders, the Free Staters were not. It was the Transvaal's war and the Free State, having no trouble at all with Britain, had entered it merely to help their kin. Now the Transvaal might do as it liked, the Free State was fighting to the end.

'Who', wrote Smuts at the time, 'shall say that he was wrong? His answer meant two years more of war, the utter destruction of both Republics, losses in life and treasure compared with which the appalling losses of the preceding eight months were to dwindle into utter insignificance. But it meant also that every Boer who was to survive that death struggle, every child to be born in South Africa, was to have a prouder self-respect, and a more erect carriage before the nations of the world.'

Roberts' forces attacked Pretoria on the 4th of June. While, for a few hours, his four or five hundred burghers held them off, Smuts sent away the munitions from the fort, and then set about collecting the Government's money.

The Government's money was lying in a bank. It consisted of half a million pounds' worth of bar gold and four hundred pounds in cash. There was also an accessible sum of twenty-five thousand pounds (actually war funds) standing to the personal credit of the Commandant-General.

Smuts began his quest for the Government money—he tested his position—by peacefully asking the directors of the bank for the four hundred pounds. The directors would not yield it. Smuts, seeing then how he stood, brought along fifty policemen, and under the threat of force compelled the directors to hand over the half-million of gold.

He next took the twenty-five thousand pounds to another bank, asking whether, in view of the Government's departure from Pretoria, the bank would pay out the arrear salaries of the Government officials. The bank declined to undertake the task, and the officials themselves were at the

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moment busy considering how they could prevent the State Attorney making off with the Government money. That money, the half-million of gold, Smuts brought during the afternoon to the station, and even while the shells were bursting overhead loaded it on to a special train and sent it off.

It kept the Boers going for another two years against an outlay of two hundred million pounds sterling, as Smuts remarks with pride, from the British Treasury. And, after it had done its work in the war, it continued, he says, 'to spook in the minds of great British statesmen' as millions of pounds lying hidden somewhere on the veld or in Europe ready to be used against Britain in future campaigns.

This half-million of gold that Smuts rushed out of Pretoria under British fire, and that for two years fed and clothed the Boer forces, is the origin of the stories about the Kruger millions.

Smuts went to the mountains of the Magaliesberg.

Chapter XVII

BOER DESPAIR

I

There came now over the Boers, says Smuts, a spreading spirit of surrender. Earlier in the year they had vainly asked various European powers to intervene. They had hoped particularly for the help of Germany. If there had been no formal agreements between themselves and Germany, there had been tacit encouragements, significant amiabilities—the Kaiser's telegram to Kruger deprecating the Raid. How were they to know that the Kaiser had actually worked out a military plan for Roberts, telling him he was wrong to go on with the Natal campaign and he ought instead to attack the Boers in the Free State? To-day the Free State was annexed and its President a fugitive. Pretoria, hardly defended, had fallen. The capital of the Transvaal moved with the train that carried President and administration. There was bad news from the Cape, and the Cape Boers had not risen in a body to help their northern brethren. There was bad news from the Eastern Transvaal. The campaign in the Western Transvaal had ended in defeat and occupation. To the Boers who had wanted peace after the fall of Bloemfontein were now added their comrades who had stiffened themselves to that final effort at Pretoria which was never demanded of them, and, to all of these, the anguished population in the occupied areas. There

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seemed nothing to hope for. The war and their independence could not be otherwise than lost.

Steyn and de Wet in the Free State, Botha in the Eastern Transvaal, Smuts and de la Rey in the Western Transvaal, determined to rally their broken people.

There was a meeting at a place called Cypherfontein at which the mines again figured.

This time the Boers had feelings about destroying the mines that differed from those which had moved them to decorum a few months ago. They were embittered by the devastation of their countryside and the sufferings of their families, they were desperate and reckless. From the point of view too of morality in war the situation was changed. For now the British held the Rand, and to attack an enemy's possession was a permissible act of war.

This was their plan (says Smuts): They would lure the enemy into the outside districts, and then a Boer force of twelve or fifteen thousand would suddenly and unexpectedly be concentrated along the whole Rand by Botha, de Wet and de la Rey and they would destroy with dynamite all the mines and mining property. They would then go, Botha into Natal, and de Wet and de la Rey into the Cape, there to harass the British and arouse the Boers.

'When I reflect', wrote Smuts a few years later, 'what I was a year later enabled to do with my handful of men in Cape Colony after the situation had changed much for the worse, I have no hesitation in saying that our plans, if carried out, would have meant a speedy conclusion of the war.'

They were not carried out. However well they were laid, they could not be.

Botha collected over five thousand men in the Eastern Transvaal, Smuts and de la Rey went into the Western

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Transvaal (the same de la Rey who captured the British General Methuen, and whose accidental death on the eve of the Boer rebellion in 1914 was so strange that many would not believe it was accidental). They exhorted the population—de la Rey saying he would set up his own Republic rather than surrender. They collected commandos. They drove the enemy from their posts of occupation. . . . Attached to de la Rey (a very religious man) was one van Rensburg, a prophet. The prophet prophesied as he was still prophesying—still inspiring de la Rey and the people—in 1914. He had visions resembling Pharaoh's dream of the lean and fat kine—he saw red and black bulls. He prophesied the downfall of the British.

Westwards too came de Wet and then north over the Magaliesbergen. He came, making little attacks where he dared, twistedly retreating, evading the forces of five famous British generals, perfecting a type of warfare that was to keep the British engaged for fifteen months after Roberts, thinking the war over, sailed for Europe and left Kitchener, his chief-of-staff, in command.

This system of deliberate flight, says Smuts, was one of the Boers' most potent weapons. After the elusive Boer commandos came the English mounted infantry on their burdened horses with their long convoys and their heavy guns. The Boers rode lightly forward and rested while the English lumbered after them in exhausting pursuit. 'We were always fresh and ready for work, and the English were always tired—their horses done for, fit only to be sent to remount camps or be shot.'

Soon the entire west, as Smuts says, was clear of the enemy, his martial law and his proclamations, and the relieved people were weeping in an ecstasy of gratitude and renewed hope. It gave him a new understanding of happiness, he says, to see them so uplifted by their deliverance.

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But their happiness did not last long. Next month the British drove back Botha and de Wet. In September Kruger fled to Lourenço Marques. In October he sailed for Europe in a Dutch warship. A fortnight later the British annexed the Transvaal.

It was, of all people, Rhodes—ill and eighteen months from his death—who, at this moment, chose to maintain that the Dutch were not beaten. 'No, they are as vigorous and unconquered to-day as they ever have been. The country is still as much theirs as yours, and you will have to live and work with them hereafter as in the past. Let there be no vaunting words, no vulgar triumph.' The Dutch were not so sure that they were still as vigorous and unconquered as they ever had been. Botha, Smuts, de la Rey and de Wet and others had isolated successes, but the plans that were to have culminated in the destruction of the gold mines were here ended, and so passed, in Smuts' words, their last chance of victory.

Things had gone too far. Plans that might have succeeded six months or a year ago were now beyond accomplishment. Smuts remained with the consolation of knowing that 'notwithstanding our failures we did not proceed aimlessly. . . . We had a great plan before our minds which promised success. . . . It was mainly the immense disparity of power and resources that prevented us from carrying out our plan.'

Yet this 'disparity of power and resources' was actually part of the Boers' failure, and not merely the cause of it from without. They themselves were largely responsible for the disparity. They were great marksmen, tireless horsemen and as courageous as even Chamberlain came to say. The first three months of fighting that the British public thought would make an end of the whole Boer business went overwhelmingly to the bearded rustics who had not

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even uniforms. There was a week in December of 1899 that came to be called in England Black Week. Within five days the Boers had the victories of Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso. Distinguished British generals surrendered to them. They encircled Kimberley, Ladysmith and Mafeking . . . And it all came to nothing. The Boers had trusted their fate, when war began, to commanders of historic fame whose reputations, made in Kaffir wars, could not be maintained in a war against Europeans. The Boers should have gone, as soon as war commenced, to the Cape Colony and there aroused the Cape Boers and attacked the British. They lay instead about towns they could not attack because they lacked the guns, nor take because they had no bayonets. They lay about these towns until even the sentimental purpose they had in besieging them was lost. Plans were not co-ordinated. Victories were not followed up. Time, substance and chances were alike wasted while the British brought in their guns and men by the hundred thousand; learnt to understand the Boers and their ways of war; learnt to copy some of their ways—the dull garb which the Boers used out of necessity, the idea of trenches; while they invented methods of their own. . . .

These methods, Botha said, were contrary to the international laws of warfare. But the Boers' chances were gone before these days. Their cause was fundamentally lost during the period of Joubert's victories, before he died and Botha replaced him. By the time Smuts came to play a leading part the Boers were fighting because they could not bring themselves to do anything else. Their only hope was that something might yet happen to their advantage if they struggled long enough. The point is that the great plans which, as Smuts thought, might have speedily finished the war were delayed until they could not be carried out.

When Botha spoke of the methods that were contrary to the international laws of warfare he meant the sending of women and children to concentration camps while homesteads were gutted, horses rounded up, cattle, sheep and grain seized, standing crops burnt down. The policy was initiated by Roberts and continued by Kitchener, for they believed the war could never otherwise be made to stop in a country where every farmer was a soldier and every farmhouse a barracks, and men, hungry and without arms, could steal across the veld to find in their homes refuge and renewal.

There was indeed some military justification for these methods Botha denounced, and yet so far from sooner ending the war they had the effect of prolonging it. They maddened the Boers into prolonging it. Campbell-Bannerman had asked, fifteen months after the war began, why it could not be announced 'that if they would lay down their arms, leaders and burghers alike, if they would return to their homes and resume their old life, they would enjoy their property with their families, and that their kinsfolk who had been sent to exile as prisoners would be restored on the same terms'. Such a proclamation, he thought, might 'lift the cloud of despair from off them and let the dawn of a new hope soften their feelings to their conquerors'.

His advice was not taken. Milner, reaching England on Smuts' thirty-first birthday, the birthday too of the old Queen who was now dead, was on that day received by the King, made a Privy Councillor and a G.C.B. and raised to the peerage under the title of Baron Milner of St. James's and Cape Town. And what Milner said the day after receiving his honours was: 'I do not know whether I feel more inclined to laugh or cry when I have to listen for the hundredth time to these dear delusions, this Utopian dog-

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matizing, that it only requires a little more time, a little more tact, a little more meekness, a little more of all those gentle virtues of which I know I am so conspicuously devoid, in order to conciliate—to conciliate what? Panoplied hatred, insensate ambitions, invincible ignorance.' He begged the people of England not to let themselves be bored into abandoning the work that had already cost thousands of men and millions of money.

The work went on. The burnings continued. Twenty thousand women and children died in the concentration camps. Least of all did Campbell-Bannerman blame the soldiers for these things. 'We know the British soldier, we know he is the most warm-hearted, the most tender-hearted, the most soft-hearted creature.' He attacked the 'methods of barbarism' but he meant, he said, the whole policy that involved 'destroying the homes of women and children', and not the spirit of the soldiers; and men like Mr. Lloyd George supported him.

If there was thus a party in England which was out to win the war at all costs, if to the bewildered British public the war seemed a righteous crusade, there was also a party which was prepared to be stoned in its denunciation of what the war involved. When Botha came to visit England as first Prime Minister of the Union that Campbell-Bannerman had made possible, he said it was the three words 'methods of barbarism'—from an English leader, supported by his party—that gave the Boers the heart to make peace; and there was never a visitor to England so cheered by British crowds as this Botha who a few years ago had commanded an army against them.

At the end of 1900 Mrs. Smuts (the boy following the twins having died) was sent to Maritzburg, where there was

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now one of the concentration camps Campbell-Bannerman denounced and the Boers still remember. For, in the inexperience of those suddenly called upon to direct the camps, in the confusion of those who were sent there: the bewildered transfer from veld to camp, the crowding, the strange new ways of life, the infections the veld-dwellers themselves did not know how to combat, thousands of the women and children became ill and died. And the monument in Bloemfontein which is erected to these dead women and children is a monument no less to national bitterness.

It is frequently said that Mrs. Smuts herself was detained in the concentration camp at Maritzburg and that her children died there.

This is not true. Mrs. Smuts lived in a house and her children, born under the Republican flag, died in the Transvaal. Her six living children were born under the British flag, yet also, except the youngest, under the old Transvaal flag, for Mrs. Smuts, at their coming, had the old Transvaal flag unfurled over her bed.

The youngest, a girl, was born during the Boer rebellion of 1914 which Smuts and Louis Botha themselves went out to crush. And she was called by the names destined for a son, Louis de la Rey.

Chapter XVIII

GUERRILLA

I

In March 1901, following conversations between Botha and Kitchener at a place called Middelburg (Transvaal), Britain offered the Boers—in return for complete surrender—an amnesty to belligerents, a possible loan for the renewal of farms, the right of children to be taught at Government schools in their home language, the right of the former Republics to keep their natives disfranchised. Also military administration was to be replaced at the earliest opportunity by Crown Colony government.

The offer was refused without explanation (though it was understood that the treatment of the Cape rebels was the chief stumbling-block), but in May 1901, at a farmhouse in the Eastern Transvaal, there met a council of war to reconsider the matter. Members of the wandering Government were present and also Botha and Smuts and other soldiers. Earlier in the year Smuts had attacked and taken the Modderfontein ridge and held it against the English. But, generally speaking, there was little to show on the credit side. The story was one of surrender, demoralisation and loss of hope. Homes were being burnt down; men in the field had faith neither in their leaders nor in their fugitive Government; the foreign powers were, more certainly than ever now, not intervening. When Kruger approached Germany for help, he was threatened with arrest should he cross the frontier.

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These were things Smuts could never forgive. He could forgive the enemy England that had the greatness to trust those who hated her. He could not forgive the soft-speakers whose words, meaning nothing, had betrayed them. 'For us', he said, when the Boers were facing their end as a nation, 'for us the foreign situation is and remains that we enjoy much sympathy, for which we are, of course, heartily thankful: that is all we get. . . . Europe will sympathise with us till the last Boer hero lies in his last resting place, till the last Boer woman has gone to her grave with a broken heart, till our entire nation shall have been sacrificed.' When the Great War broke out he reminded Boer soldiers of the humiliation of Kruger at the hands of Germany. When the Great War was over he spoke of the days 'when we were battling for our existence and not a single nation put out a hand to help us'. . . .

The outcome of the conference was a letter to Steyn saying that the time had arrived for surrender. The outcome of the letter to Steyn was a reply from him of contempt, wrath and an injunction to go on.

From Kruger too, when the British allowed Smuts, for the Boers, to communicate with him, came instructions to go on. Kruger still saw hope in the situation in the Cape and the feelings of the European peoples. He said they were 'to continue the struggle till the last means of resistance were exhausted'.

They went on. They continued the struggle. They had no longer the men or material to fight pitched battles such as Botha had finally attempted in the Eastern Transvaal with his five thousand men. The British forces, too, were overwhelming, and, more ruinous than anything, Kitchener had instituted his blockhouse system. It was, in these days, another kind of war. It was the kind of war that made de Wet famous, that Smuts was about to practise in the Cape,

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and that inspired such admiring awe in the English when, during the Great War, Colonel Lawrence practised it in Arabia. It was a manner of fighting that could only be pursued with small, agile bodies of men in a big, wild country—a gnat-like affair of harrying an enemy, buzzing away and coming back to harry him in another place. It was an affair of raids—often brilliant and dangerous—on convoys and garrisoned posts, of attacks on isolated bodies, of wrecking trains, bridges and telegraph wires, of endlessly disturbing and distracting. While even a few men were left it could go on. The guerrilla warriors always had this advantage over the regular armies: they had only to harass, never to hold. They could do their bit of destruction and get away. Against the original guerrilla warriors—the Spaniards—untrained, ill-equipped, Napoleon had to send four hundred thousand men. When in turn the Spaniards went against Cuba, thirty or forty thousand Cubans maintained themselves against two hundred and thirty thousand Spaniards. During the Great War Smuts himself, in German East Africa, had a hundred and fourteen thousand troops, black and white, against the Germans' twenty thousand. At the end of the Boer War, when the Boers had only eighteen thousand men of their original sixty thousand, and the British had three or four hundred thousand men, and Smuts said there was no reason—no military reason—why the war should cease, it was still possible to continue this guerrilla warfare.

The rules of such warfare, according to the Hague decision, are that guerrilla bands, no less than armies, must have a responsible leader, obey the laws of war, carry arms openly and wear distinctive badges.

It is to be doubted if the Boers knew of the Hague decision. But, of course, every Boer leader was a responsible leader. As for the laws of war, they followed them, the

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Boers believed, better than the English. They were delighted to carry arms openly. The trouble was that they did not always have arms. In the last year of the war they depended on their prisoners for weapons, they trailed English columns for abandoned cartridges. At the end of the war, when the Boers came to surrender their rifles, it was found that they nearly all had the Lee-Metfords of the English and not the Mausers they had started with, because they could not get cartridges for the Mausers.

As to distinctive badges, the one distinctive piece of attire the Boers had, the slouch hat, the English adopted, and the Boers themselves wore the uniforms of their captured. 'We gave them our rags,' says Smuts, 'our torn clothes and our unwearable boots, took their uniforms and boots instead and sent them back again. What else could we do with prisoners? We couldn't keep them. But we needed their clothes.'

Few of the Boers, as the war progressed, had any clothes except those made by their own women, of wool spun on spinning wheels contrived from sewing machines or fruit peelers, or sheepskin jackets or the uniforms and boots of British soldiers. Deneys Reitz tells, in *Commando*, how, his boots having rotted, he climbed a mountain barefooted and so injured his feet that for a fortnight he could not walk. Then an old man, going twenty miles 'to fetch a piece of leather of which he knew', made him a pair of raw-hide sandals. It was winter. His entire wardrobe, he says, now consisted of those sandals and a blanket, for his clothes were fallen from his body. De la Rey accordingly gave him some clothes of his own.

Later Colonel Reitz speaks of the grain-sack he wore against the cold (the natives always do that). It froze to his body like a coat of mail. So did the others of his commando wear grain-sacks.

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Presently his wardrobe consisted of a ragged coat, trousers full of holes, those raw-hide sandals—patched and re-patched—no shirt or other underwear. 'It was mid-winter, with ice in every pool and we went in tattered clothing and slept under threadbare blankets at night.'

They slept in twos, says Smuts, and shared those tattered blankets and got some warmth from one another. For years after the war men came to Smuts saying they had shared blankets with him in the Boer War, and wanting something because of it. 'After a time I began to wonder if I really had shared blankets with so many different people.'

When the rains came they used the blankets as cloaks, riding on their horses like that with their blankets billowing around them.

How were men, in such circumstances, not to wear the only clothes they could get? The English complained that they could not tell friend from foe and so were often surprised and overwhelmed. Kitchener issued a proclamation making Boer wearers of British uniforms liable to death, and a few were shot. But how could one shoot an entire army? Deneys Reitz speaks of 'wearing Lord Vivian's khaki tunic with the regimental badge and buttons and the Seventeenth Lancers skull and cross-bones on my hat, not a little proud of my well-earned trophies, and never dreaming that I was under sentence of death'. In fact, out of consideration for their necessity, Boers captured in British uniforms were almost invariably pardoned. Although each side accused the other of incredible wickednesses, the fighters were generally kind and tolerant to one another.

2

It was said of Smuts himself by one of his prisoners that 'no Bayard ever behaved better to an enemy'. Smuts, in later, easier years, used to tell how once, charging straight

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down upon the men in a mealie field, he found himself confronting a boy of seventeen with the face (says Smuts) of an angel. The boy fired and wounded Smuts, and then, overwhelmed by terror, threw away his gun and said: 'For God's sake, sir, think of my mother,' and Smuts let him go.

There is a story, perhaps more interesting, told nineteen years later by Smuts' chief opponent in the Cape, Colonel French, afterwards Field-Marshal Lord French. On Christmas Day of 1900, says French, a young Boer officer came to him under a flag of truce, asking on behalf of Commandant Beyers that they might bury their dead. French agreed. As, however, there were important movements on hand, he regretted that he could not let the officer return to his own camp until next day, when, having made him comfortable during the night, he gave him a small box of cigars and a bottle of whisky as a Christmas present to Beyers. A few days later two cavalymen taken prisoner by the Boers marched back to their own camp, with horses, arms and equipment complete, and they had a note from Beyers to French thanking him for the Christmas box and saying that, as he had unhappily no cigars or whisky to give in return, would he accept the liberation of these men as a Christmas gift? The interesting part of the story is this: that when French, after the war, told Smuts about Beyers' courtliness, Smuts replied coldly that Beyers had made an improper use of property which belonged, not to himself, but to his country.

It is also interesting to consider what happened eventually to Smuts and Beyers. Smuts became to the British Empire what the world knows. Beyers, Commandant-General of the Union forces in 1914, resigned in order to join the Germans and the Boer rebels against the English and the Union's forces, and, pursued by Botha, was drowned in

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trying to cross a swollen river on his way to German South-West Africa. . . .

It was after Steyn and Kruger had insisted on a continuance of the war that Smuts collected a body of three hundred and sixty young men and set out for the Cape to oppose the forces under this same French who had made the graceful exchange with Beyers, to rouse the Cape Boers to rebellion, to relieve the pressure in the north and to test the possibilities of a larger raid later on. Towards the end of Smuts' campaign in the Cape he was opposing about fifty thousand British and Cape soldiers, and he had added to his original three or four hundred men three thousand rebels.

What was the difference between rebelling in 1901 and rebelling in 1914, between the rebels Smuts raised and the rebels he crushed? 'We had made peace with England, and England trusted us', says Smuts in some moods. In other moods he says: 'Rebellion is rebellion. It is justified by success or it is immoral.' Again he adds: 'Was not the rebellion of 1914 quite understandable? We understood it, and treated the rebels with leniency.'

He was now going forth on those adventures which, as he declares to-day, gave him the greatest happiness of his life. He was thirty-one, broadened and strengthened and yellow-bearded and never again to resemble outwardly the angry-looking, hungry-looking youth who passed out with the nineteenth century. His brother-in-law rode with him.

He held the rank of general and commanded the Boer forces in the Cape, lately under Botha and de Wet. And not long ago, in the Republic that was no more, he had become at last a first-class burgher.

Chapter XIX

COMMANDANT-GENERAL SMUTS

I

The Vaal River divides the Transvaal from the Orange Free State. The Orange River divides the Orange Free State from the Cape. To get to the Cape, Smuts had to cross first the Vaal and then the Orange.

His force was in two parts. He had about two hundred and fifty men under that Commandant van Deventer who, as General Sir Jacobus van Deventer, assisted him in 1916 against the Germans in East Africa. He accompanied them across the Vaal into the Free State, and then, with a body-guard of twelve and four attendant natives, returned to fetch the hundred men who were waiting for him on the Transvaal side of the Vaal.

To reach these men he had to cross a river called the Mooi. It was the end of July, the depth of the winter, and the Mooi River should have been low—in parts even dry—but it was not. The drifts were barely passable on horseback. Smuts and his men had to draw their legs up as they sat on their horses. His boots were full of the icy water. . . .

They approached a kraal of natives Smuts knew. One old native warned a Smuts man that strange Kaffirs were about whom it would be well to distrust, but the man thought the warning unimportant and failed to pass it on. They off-saddled to sleep among some thorn bushes in the neighbourhood of the kraal.

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Smuts slept apart from the rest, but his natives and horses were with the other natives and horses. He took off his icy boots. He had no socks. He wrapped his head in a towel to keep out the cold, rested his head on his saddle, covered himself with his khaki blanket, and fell asleep. That must have been at ten o'clock. He was so tired that, frozen as he was, he knew nothing until, some hours later, he was awakened by shouting, firing and flashes of light. About two hundred English soldiers, guided by those natives of whom the old native had been suspicious, were around their camp. By the time Smuts was awake, three of his men had been killed, four wounded and the rest were gone. His native was killed. His horses were dead or gone. He threw his khaki blanket over his saddle, mingled—khaki-clad himself—with the rushing Tommies and escaped.

He slunk through the bushes along the roadside and heard suddenly a shout of 'Hands up!' He turned to see, in the darkness, a man guarding a prisoner, but he knew the challenging voice. It belonged to his brother-in-law.

They walked in the dark, one on each side of the silent prisoner. Nothing, his brother-in-law told him, would induce the 'khaki' to speak. He could get no information out of him. 'You try,' he said to Smuts. 'Perhaps he'll answer you.'

Smuts tried. He stared at him in the darkness. It was some time before he recognised in the silent 'khaki' a member of his own commando, shocked out of speech. Half-an-hour later still another slinking man, covering the three of them with a revolver, shouted 'Hands up!' and again it was a Boer.

So now they were four, and one of the men tore his towel in two for Smuts to wrap round his feet and they went on over the veld through the night.

The thorns and stones cut through the pieces of towel on

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Smuts' feet and when, after six miles, they came to a deserted hut, he said he was stopping here—he could go no farther. His men stayed with him. Next day they got some horses, and found his saddle, still covered with the khaki blanket, unseen and untouched—in the saddle-bags important papers. They helped him on to a horse. It was weeks before he could walk or mount a horse unaided. Boer women they met dressed his feet. . . .

Smuts and his men crossed the Vaal and joined the hundred waiting men. A day or two later, at dawn, they had just cooked their breakfast in a great pot when they were attacked by a force of Australians, and it was afternoon before they sat down around their pot, still standing there with its cold contents on the cold ashes.

Yet even now they could not get away. Now a new difficulty. From all around the neighbourhood Boer women and children with their possessions on waggons were fleeing to the small body of a hundred men for protection. To escape the English, Smuts had to cross the Vaal in the darkness of night, and take the women and children and their cumbrous possessions. In the darkness of night again he had to cross back to some other safer place. There he left the women and children before he continued on his mission through the Free State.

He began his ride on the first of August. It was nearly the end of August before he joined his advance force under van Deventer in that corner where Basutoland, the Cape and the Free State meet. At this point they had arranged to cross the Orange River together into the Cape.

Throughout the month of August, wherever he rode in the Free State, as in a nightmare of being hunted or haunted, blocking every path to the Cape, British soldiers had sprung at Smuts. 'We escaped from one to the other', he says, 'as through the teeth of a machine. The teeth closed on

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us and we squeezed through, some of us lost, to the next teeth and the next teeth. Columns of British. We could not move without meeting columns of British. We rode as far as Bloemfontein. We thought we had got away from them. We were almost at Basutoland when, returning from their drive, they caught us on their way back. We fled towards Bloemfontein again. It was over three weeks before we got above the teeth, and, in all that time, throughout the breadth of the Free State, we met only one Boer commando, and that was eighteen or nineteen men under Hertzog.'

This was Smuts' first significant meeting with James Barry Munnik Hertzog since their college days together at Stellenbosch. In the years to come, after all seemed set for peace in South Africa, they were destined to be, for twenty years, political enemies; and, in their old age, when all seemed lost, to make friends again—Smuts offering the other cheek, and General Hertzog not smiting it. Now they were both lawyers (Hertzog: Leyden and Bloemfontein) and commandants; and what General Hertzog told Smuts was that, if he hurried, there was just a chance of crossing the Orange River before the British got at him again. Smuts took that chance.

He did not realise even now that he had been entangled in the most extensive scheme of operations of the whole war—a drive initiated by Kitchener in the second week in July, compared with which every other effort of the war was insignificant. And August, in addition, was the month in which Kitchener formally threatened any Boer leader who did not surrender with permanent banishment from South Africa.

Of the three hundred and sixty men who had ridden out with Smuts from the Western Transvaal a month ago, two hundred and fifty remained.

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They were now fifteen miles from the Orange River and near Basutoland, facing the south-east of the Cape Colony, looking towards that mountain mass which darkens the map of the southern end of Africa as it follows the curve of the coast from east to west. The mountains they would have to cross were the Stormbergen. Afterwards they came to the Zuurbergen and then the Sneeuwbergen, and then the Zwartbergen.

And it was at this place, fifteen miles from the Orange River, that Deneys Reitz (as he tells in *Commando*) saw, riding over the shoulder of a distant hill, the body of horsemen that was Smuts' commando.

Reitz was with ten others, and all but one of the company were under twenty. They were on their way to the Cape to join a rebel raider they had heard of. A few days ago they had been with Hertzog's commando, trying in vain to persuade some of his men to accompany them. The men said they had been to the Cape before—they had found the conditions intolerable—once, they said, was enough—they were not going again.

Reitz and his companions were thinking now that if they wanted to get across the river before the summer rains it would be well to hurry.

2

The end of August is the end of the South African winter. Above the thirty-second parallel it does not rain in winter and the veld is stubble and sand, and the strong cold winds blow the loose sand high and sharp in the air. The cold winds bring the rains. There is an expectant hush which is spring, and summer comes.

The summer rains of the north—in the years when they do not fail—are very fierce and they are heralded by great thunder and big lightning that sometimes kills the natives.

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The dwindled rivers that, the winter through, have not had the life to crawl, rise up suddenly, full and raging, and rend everything before them. Even as one walks across the empty bed of a river, a wall of water, laden with mud and twigs and dead fish, may rush down in overwhelming flood—such a river drowned Beyers when he was trying to get to the Germans in 1914. People, horses, cattle, waggons, motor cars are often trapped and submerged on their way over an innocent-seeming river bed. The waters spread sometimes over the banks, marooning people in sudden islands, and in recent years aeroplanes have brought them food.

Reitz and his companions stood watching the approaching horsemen. They knew them for Boers from their formation and their way of riding (the Boers ride with a long stirrup and sit slack in their saddles and they love a tripping horse). They were astonished to see at the head of the horsemen 'Mr. Smuts, the Transvaal State Attorney, now a general'.

They offered to join his commando. They all rode towards the Orange River. Most of them had two horses.

3

They arrived in sight of the river late in the afternoon, and found it alive with the British troops Kitchener had instructed to keep the enemy well north of the Orange. Every footpath that led down the cliffs to the river was guarded, and patrols covered the ground between.

They returned to the hills and lay there the night.

Next day they spent scouting. Towards evening a party of fifty young Free State Boers came up, saying there were more British approaching from the rear, and if they did not wish to be trapped they had to get across the river that night. The young Free Staters offered to accompany Smuts'

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expedition into the Cape (though ultimately they proposed to return), and one of them knew a drift in the river that could be crossed. He guided them, during the night, for eight hours over the rocky ground, and then they came to a precipitous path that led to the drift. The river at this spot—thirteen miles above where the British stood on guard—was not broad, but it was very strong and the horses had trouble to keep their footing. It was morning before they were in the Cape, and as soon as they set foot on Cape soil they were attacked by some Basutos under a British officer and lost six men and thirty horses.

They travelled south-west. Four British columns devoted themselves to chasing them.

4

The rains began. The men wrapped themselves in their blankets and rode on. Sometimes, as they rode across a mountain, they saw a British column riding through the valley below, but they had no fear of these distant columns hampered with their gun carriages. They could always get away from them.

A few days after crossing the Orange River they came to a cutting in a mountain. The cutting was called Moor-denaar's Poort, which means Murderer's Gap, and, as it was late in the afternoon, they were about to camp for the night when a native told them that English troops were not far away.

Smuts said he would go to see for himself. That was what he always did: he explored the unknown personally—despite the remonstrances of his men, he accompanied his scouts where there was difficulty or danger.

The danger he never considered. The fact that, without him, the expedition must fail—must indeed suddenly end—he also chose to ignore. He was prepared to do what he

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expected his men to do—more essentially he doubted if they could do it as well as he could do it. Smuts has the capacity for great self-control, but it is not hard to see that he hates slowness and fumbling. He often says it is a great art to know how to delegate one's work to other people. And it is certainly with relief that he lets his farm manager run his farm, and Mrs. Smuts pay his bills and make up his income-tax accounts. Ways and means of living do not interest him. But no one else may touch his books, and, generally speaking, he would rather do any sort of significant thing himself than test the capacity of somebody else to do it. All the time he was Prime Minister he was, in effect, the Government, hardly remembering, hardly hearing, hardly wanting, his colleagues. If there was a revolution in Johannesburg he had himself to dash up from Cape Town to stop it.

There is an idea that it must be a serene thing for Smuts to contemplate the world's doings from afar—to make pronouncements from South African platforms which the cables will duly carry oversea—or every year or two to fly prophetically to England. It may be a romantic, impressive thing, but it certainly is not a thing that quietens his nerves. 'To be there!' he thinks. 'To be in it! To be doing it! . . .'

Here, in raiding the Cape Colony, over the mountains, in the rain, he marched record marches, and all the time he had to find clothes and provisions in this manner or that for his troops, and fodder for his horses. And he was relentlessly followed by one or more British columns, and he was fighting and directing, and his main business, after all, was the getting of recruits. But if there was scouting on hand, he had to be there.

Now at Moordenaar's Poort he rode off with three companions to see if the native's story about the English was true. It was an unfortunate expedition. He came back hours

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later, towards night, alone on foot. His three companions had been killed, and their horses and his horse too under him, and he had escaped down a dry watercourse.

They continued on their way. The weather grew steadily worse—colder, more windy, more stormy. They rode, as Smuts says, in water, they slept in water. They could not get dry fuel. They could not get grass for their horses. The hungry, sick, exhausted animals died.

They seldom stopped riding until long after dark. They slept side by side in the mud under such shelter as they could find and shared their blankets.

In the village where they had expected to meet another rebel leader they met instead an English column. And that night (so black a night that one could not see the man immediately in front) they did not sleep at all. With the rain driving in their faces, and a wind numbing them with cold, they went on foot leading their horses because the horses had not the strength to carry them—and then they lost their way, and feeling they could not go on any longer, remained standing together in the mud, like sheep in the corner of a kraal, waiting for the day.

They rode that day through the shelling of the English, nor dared to rest many hours when night came. It was a week since they had crossed the Orange River and they had not yet had a night's sleep, they were exhausted through hunger and exposure, they had lost many of their horses, their ammunition was all but gone.

Now, having accompanied them over drift and mountain pass, their Free State comrades had to leave them, and next day, by Smuts' command, still leading their horses in order to save them on the mountains, skirting the English lying in every valley and across every road, travelling ceaselessly for twenty-four hours, Smuts' commando arrived at the Stormbergen and mounted to the top. They found Brit-

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ish troops on the other side, and from all directions now they met the fire of machine guns. They replied with such ammunition as they had left. A gale blew all day.

Night came, and they found themselves before a small farmhouse in a hollow, and now it was forty hours since they had rested and the British were closing in on them, and they were so weary that they hardly cared whether the British took them or not: there seemed, indeed, no doubt that taken they must be.

Smuts and his two lieutenants stood before the farmhouse considering what to do. The English had ceased their bombardment, certain that they had them trapped, waiting merely for the morning and their surrender. Out of the farmhouse now came a hunchback cripple.

He said he knew a way, unguarded because it led through a bog, by which they could escape the English. They put him on a horse and he guided them along a path so close to the English that they could hear the soldiers talking, and the movements of their horses. He left them, going back through the night on his crutches. They slithered down the precipice on their horses and found themselves on the plain below, free for the moment of the enemy, but with the necessity of crossing two railway lines before they could rest. Smuts would not let them rest. They marched for another twenty hours. It rained all day.

5

At eleven o'clock that night the rain stopped and a cold wind blew, and now they found themselves at the first railway line, and coming down the line they saw the lights of a train. They considered whether they should put stones on the line to wreck it. But Smuts thought there might be civilians in the train, so they let it pass. Standing there in the wind of the night, having fought and marched unceasingly

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for ten days, having eaten where Boers fed them or they found a sheep to kill, having rested not at all now for over fifty hours, they saw, in the dining car of the passing train, officers smoking and drinking and happily chatting.

A few months later French told Smuts that he himself had been on this train which Smuts had refused to wreck—going towards the mountain where he still supposed Smuts to be, to attack him. . . .

They went on. 'Whenever there was a delay at a fence or a ditch, whole rows of men', says Deneys Reitz, 'would fall asleep on their hands and knees before their horses, like Mohammedans at prayer, and it was necessary to go round shaking them to their feet to prevent their being left behind.' But yet Smuts would not let them rest until they had crossed the second railway line. Then, after sixty hours of unbroken marching and fighting, they slept at last.

Next day it rained again, and again they had to fly before pursuit. It rained unceasingly during the days that followed. Men who had horses left led them, others without horses followed carrying their saddles, on the horses still able to bear a burden rode the wounded. On September the 17th they heard from a Boer farmer that a party of two hundred English soldiers with mountain and machine guns and three hundred horses and mules were waiting for them. 'If we do not get those horses and a supply of ammunition, we are done for', said Smuts, and gave the order to attack.

Firing from behind trees and rocks, they went forward. They worked their way round the English and fired from a hill in the rear: at a small outcrop of rocks, the height of a man, the opposing forces met. A distance no greater than a handshake, says Reitz, separated them. 'As the soldiers raised their heads to fire we brought them down, for they were no match for us in short-range work of this kind.'

The soldiers (they belonged to the Seventeenth Lancers)

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surrendered. Smuts' commando refitted itself with the horses, uniforms and ammunition of the prisoners. Tents and waggons were burnt down, guns destroyed, and the prisoners set free.

At the end of their resources the Boers had achieved their first real victory. They were not only refitted but revitalised. They had hope again in their destiny and more faith than ever in their leader. . . .

6

Cape newspaper extract:

'The Commandant Smuts who cut up the Seventeenth Lancers near Tarkastad the other day is the ex-*Staats Procureur* of the late Transvaal Republic, and as such was as responsible as Kruger and Reitz for the hastening of hostilities. It was he who advised the attitude adopted by Kruger at the Bloemfontein Conference, and who, incidentally, was severely snubbed by Lord Milner. It was he who personally represented the Transvaal Government in the lengthy negotiations with Sir W. Conyngham Greene, representing Britain at Pretoria, and made a most shocking mess of things by his overbearing arrogance; it was he who wrote the insolent despatches to Britain, which in themselves were sufficient to have provoked war; it was he, finally, who inspired the gorgeous ultimatum of October 8th to which Reitz and Kruger put their names. . . . This is his first visit to the Colony since he left it as a barrister. His appearance as a Commandant is surprising.'

7

A few notes, taken from reports, official, private and newspaper (all British), to give some indication of Smuts' wanderings during his first two months in the Colony:



COMMANDO, APRIL 1902
J. C. SMUTS IN THE CENTRE

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September 3rd: Commando of Transvaal Boers, under Smuts, about three hundred strong, entered Colony east of Aliwal North and then moved south.

September 5th: Ten miles south-east of Lady Grey. Troops disposed to meet them.

September 7th: Local troops in evening ambushed four Boers at Dordrecht. Two wounded, one killed. Fourth man, who was wounded but got away, said to be Smuts himself.

September 9th: Near Jamestown. Smuts hovering about with following from Orange Free State and reported to be in miserable condition.

September 10th: Colonel Monro engaged near Dordrecht.

September 12th: Smuts driven southward.

September 15th: Smuts crossed Honing Spruit. Pursuing columns hindered by wet weather from crossing Spruit.

September 17th: (1) Colonel Doran in touch with Smuts' commando north-east of Tarkastad.

(2) Colonel Gorrington engaged Smuts this morning north of Tarkastad. Two prisoners taken. Rains. Floods.

(3) Smuts defeated Seventeenth Lancers. English surrounded by four hundred or five hundred Boers. Fight lasted two and a half hours. 'General Smuts is said to have personally behaved with soldierly feeling and courtesy, but was unable to restrain his men from many acts unworthy of fighting men.'

(4) Sixty-seven casualties out of one hundred and twenty-six Lancers in Commandant Smuts' charge through cordon hemming him in at Eland's River Poort to the west of Tarkastad. Enemy dressed in khaki mistaken for English.

September 19th: After dark enemy went south-south-west over Bombas Mountains.

September 20th: Smuts seen moving south-west.

September 21st: (1) Smuts' commando checkmated south-west of Tarkastad. Eight Boers wounded.

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(2) Smuts' commando attempted break through at Gan-nahoek.

September 24th: Middelburg, Cape. Latest news of Smuts' commando. Horses exhausted. Men short of food.

September 30th: Smuts has moved rapidly south before our columns.

October 2nd: Smuts engaged by our troops yesterday.

October 6th: (1) A party of Somerset East district troops captured by Smuts after short fight.

(2) Smuts' commando hard pressed by columns in close pursuit.

October 7th: Smuts has headed north and is now near Darlington.

October 13th: Smuts' commando now supposed to be somewhere in the Somerset East district. Many of the men on foot leading their horses.

October 15th: Smuts' commando has now been divided into two forces, one to the north of Aberdeen and the other south-west of Somerset. Each is closely followed by our columns.

October 19th: Smuts engaged by Colonel Lukin and retreating fast.

October 20th: Smuts driven northwards.

October 24th: Smuts pressed in Sneeuwbergen. Lukin in contact with Smuts on Sunday.

October 26th: Smuts constantly on the move. The hunt after Smuts' commando. Six weeks of continual trekking and running away. Four columns engaged in pursuit.

November 4th: Smuts pursued several days between Oudtshoorn, Ladysmith and Barrydale. . . .

In the course of his work in the Cape, Smuts, in fact, went through twenty-eight districts—some as large as, say, Wales—and his march of seven hundred miles in five weeks was a record march for a Boer commando. 'Day after day,

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week after week, month after month,' said French when the British were welcoming Smuts' assistance in 1917, 'our distinguished guest, with every disadvantage in the way of numbers, arms, transport, equipment and supply, evaded all my attempts to bring him to decisive action.' And he told the story of Marius' reply to Sulla's challenge: 'If you be a great General, come and fight me.' Marius said: 'If you be a great General, compel me to fight you. . . .'

It may be as well to remember here that it was Smuts' primary business not merely to harass the English but to get recruits in the Cape and to foment a general rising.

He knew by this time that there would be no general rising, yet—amazingly if one considered his checkered movements—he did get recruits. And it was because of Smuts' recruiting activities that Kitchener, in October, put the Cape Colony under martial law. Smuts had by this time fifteen hundred men under him, six-sevenths of whom were British subjects.

He carried in his saddle-bag a Greek Testament and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* that he had found in a gutted farmhouse.

Chapter XX

'MY DUTY'

I

When, thirty-two years after his appearance in the Cape as a rebel leader, Smuts went there to persuade the people—British and Dutch, British and British, Dutch and Dutch—to fuse at last, if never before, he told them from his platforms how, long ago, he had come among them in circumstances so different. Here, he said, he had commandeered provisions; here won clothes and horses; here taken sheep to slaughter; here, longing for a cup of coffee, passed a town that was English and the people of the town had hidden themselves in ravines and behind locked doors. That was not very hospitable treatment, was it? to let a weary Boer commando ride through their town without offering them a cup of coffee. . . .

The Boers depended, of course, on chance, conquest and kindness for clothes and food. They carried nothing with them. If they won no fight to give them clothes and boots, they had merely the remnants—what the natives would call the *name* of clothes and boots. If they passed no farmhouses that gave them food out of love or compulsion, they went hungry.

Once, coming to barren, uninhabited country, they were so desperate for food that they ate a wild fruit called Hottentots' Bread which they did not know was poisonous in the spring time. All who ate it became extremely ill and Smuts

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nearly died. He had to be held on his horse as they made away before attack; when he was put on the ground because of shelling he could hardly be got away at all. Escaping down gorges, riding in cold rain, lying in thorny hollows, attacking and being attacked, he directed their path and their fighting through his illness. . . .

One of the worst aspects of the expedition was that they could not get fodder for their horses, and for that reason, as well as other reasons, also no horses, and because no horses, again, no men.

Smuts explained this to the Boer delegates when they were computing their chances before making peace—why the trouble about horses was so ruinous to his venture: 'There will be no general rising in the Cape', he said. 'We had very good expectations, and thought that it would not be difficult to cause a general rising there. The people are very enthusiastic—more so than with us; but they have peculiar difficulties. The first is with reference to horses. The British have taken the horses that could be used and shot the others. There is accordingly a great scarcity of horses in the Cape Colony. Further, it is extraordinarily difficult for the colonist to rise if he has to fight on foot, with the knowledge that if he is captured he will have to undergo heavy punishment. Unmounted men cannot fight in the Cape Colony, you can operate only with mounted commandos, and as we have no horses we cannot accept a tenth of those who are willing to join us. On account of this deficiency of horses, we cannot expect a general rising.

'Another great difficulty is the absence of grass. The veld throughout the entire Cape Colony is overgrown with scrub. There is no grass as in the Republics. Where you have no forage the horses cannot exist. . . .

'The question of horses and forage is thus the great stumbling-block for our cause in the Cape.'

It was partly to give the English a more complex task, partly because of this difficulty of getting food for horses and men—the chances of finding none at all or of getting not enough for so many, that Smuts, as may be seen from the note of October 15th, again divided his force in two. One half he himself led, the other half was under Commandant van Deventer.

They had, by this time, crossed the Great Fish River and the Zuurbergen, they had ridden through primeval forests, and come so near Algoa Bay as to see in the distance the lights of Port Elizabeth. Now they were to go west towards the Atlantic seaboard, across the plains of the Karroo (Karoo is a Hottentot word meaning 'dry'), across the Zwartbergen, through those districts of the western province in which Smuts' ancestors had lived for two hundred years and he himself was born. They were to go, each party in a separate direction, and far in the west they were to meet.

The scheme was news to the commando. But whatever Smuts proposed was always news to them. Then, as to-day, he told no one about his ideas, and consulted no one. They did not, says Deneys Reitz, 'know what General Smuts' intentions were at any stage of the expedition, for he was a silent man.' Yet his unexplained commands seem to have been obeyed—a strange thing if one remembers how every Boer thinks himself as good as the next, how impatient Boers are of control, how unconventionally they fight, and the way, on their treks, they habitually quarrelled with their leaders. On the Great Trek that began in 1834, small treks were always breaking away; and when they came to settle, there was every now and then a new republic. . . .

They passed the inhabited parts and began to travel north-

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west in the direction of the mouth of the Orange River. Now there were no railways and no blockhouses—also no grass, no water and few people. And hither, towards the mountains where Smuts lay, came various small bands of rebels to join him, and he organised them into commandos.

3

There is a word, greatly used in the nineteenth century, that to-day has fallen into disrepute. Smuts uses it still. My duty, he says. It was my duty.

It has been Smuts' duty to do, in his time, many things that brought trouble to himself not less than to others. Take, for instance, the case of Jopie Fourie.

In 1914, Jopie Fourie was court-martialled and sentenced to death for going into rebellion in his Defence Force uniform, for leading his men into rebellion. There was a terrible outcry in the country over the death sentence. Half the Boers in the Union thought it no more than right for a Boer as a Boer to go into rebellion against England. They felt that it could not be regarded as a wicked thing merely to take this good opportunity to rise against England. It was unbelievable to them that Jopie Fourie could actually be made to suffer death for it. Smuts confirmed the sentence. 'I would have shirked my duty if I had not', he says. 'A dozen men lost their lives through Fourie. His death did our cause a good deal of harm. My own life was threatened. It damaged me in the country. But from the higher point of view there was no question of what was right. I had to confirm the sentence.'

As if the affair of Jopie Fourie were not enough, Smuts, in 1922, went himself to stop the revolution on the Rand, and he used military measures against the revolutionaries. That, politically, ruined him. 'And I knew it would', he says. 'Before I ever went into it I knew I would never re-

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cover from the effects of that action. My eyes were open. But it was no time to think about my political career. There are moments when you have to risk yourself. The whole country was at stake. It would have gone Bolshevik. I could not rely on the people of Johannesburg. I had to go myself. It was my duty.'

Those people who doubted the course Smuts was likely to take in the case of Jopie Fourie or in the Johannesburg revolution should have remembered how Smuts, as soon as he became State Attorney at the age of twenty-eight, did what no other State Attorney before him had ventured to do and dismissed the head detective, who never seemed to be able to catch the really big illicit sellers of liquor. They should have remembered what happened to Lemuel Colaine.

4

Early in January of 1902, Smuts decided to go north as far as the Orange River itself. Along the banks of the Orange River there were a number of small rebel bands, and Smuts thought he would go and organise them. He made his arrangements, and then returned to look for van Deventer, who was said to be fighting somewhere about these parts, and whom he had not seen since they had separated to go west. He set out on the three-hundred-mile desert ride with merely his staff.

He found van Deventer, and they joined their forces again. Other small commandos came to them and in one of these small commandos was a Dutch Colonial, a bearded Boer of a man, called Lemuel Colaine (or more probably Colijn). Colaine stayed with them awhile and suddenly disappeared.

He returned at dawn one morning, leading a body of English soldiers, who cut through the surprised camp with

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their swords, killed and wounded seventeen men, and got clean away. A few days later, when Smuts, in turn, attacked a British camp and took it, they caught Colaine. They found him hiding in a kitchen and brought him, under guard, to Smuts. Smuts was in the house of the local member of Parliament, talking to his wife and daughter. He asked if the man could be absolutely identified and was assured that he could be. 'Take him out and shoot him', said Smuts. The man fell to his knees. The women began to weep. 'Take him out and shoot him', repeated Smuts.

A Dutch Reformed minister asked leave to pray with him, and in the smithy behind the house predikant and sentenced man knelt together.

Presently the firing party came to say they were ready and Colaine shook hands with the minister and accompanied his guards to where his grave was being dug. On the way he said he knew he deserved to die, but he had taken English money to betray the Boers because of his desperate need. He seemed calm, yet when he arrived at where Hottentots were digging his grave, he cried out to see the predikant again, and also Smuts. The men around him understood that he hoped even now for a reprieve, and they understood also that a reprieve would not be granted. They placed him beside his grave and blindfolded him. He recited the Lord's Prayer. When he was done they fired and he fell into his grave. . . .

Less than a fortnight later Smuts and his commando were on the Olifants—the Elephant's—River and within twenty-five miles of the sea, and he sent for all the Boers who had never before seen the sea to come with him. He guided them to the sea and they rode in on their horses. . . . They went north again.

The talk among the men was that Smuts intended to lure a British force to attack him here, and then he would

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make his way down the west coast and take Cape Town itself.

They rode through Namaqualand, the desert country of the Hottentots where, in the year the Huguenots came to the Cape, copper was found, and on again still north, towards the Buffalo River. On the way they found at a mission station the bodies of a number of Hottentots, killed by a man who, in 1914, came to be a leader in the Boer rebellion. The Hottentots had attacked him, and next day he had returned and killed them all and destroyed the settlement. 'General Smuts said nothing,' reports Deneys Reitz, 'but I saw him walk past the boulders where the dead lay, and on his return he was moody and curt, as was his custom when displeased. . . . We lived in an atmosphere of rotting corpses for some days, for we had to wait here for news that our forces had arrived within striking distance of the copper mines.'

At the copper mines there were three villages held by British troops and Hottentots, and these villages Smuts proposed to take in turn. As ammunition was exhausted, the Boers made bombs out of dynamite and so, following their example, did the British.

Two of the villages were poorly defended, and the first yielded after some resistance, and the second without firing a shot. From these two villages Smuts got enough ammunition and dynamite bombs to besiege, after their curt refusal to surrender, the third and largest village. Its name was O'okiep, and Smuts was still besieging it when news came that peace negotiations were on foot.

The news did not surprise him. He understood that the end of the war was coming. The siege was hardly even, in its last stages, a serious affair. Besieged challenged besiegers to a football match, and besiegers all but accepted the challenge.

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The Boers under Smuts were feeling very happy. Things seemed to be going excellently for them. Smuts, starting from the Transvaal with three hundred and sixty men, arriving at the boundary of the Cape with two hundred and fifty, had two thousand six hundred men under his own command, and in other commandos there were another seven hundred. He had stores of grain here and there and also remount stations. It was true there were fifty thousand English and Dutch Afrikaners against them in the Cape alone, but they had the experience that little nimble, keen forces in guerrilla war can long engage a large army. Smuts could hardly bear to tell his men, as he said good-bye to them on going off to the peace negotiations, that the Boers had not, after all, won the war. . . .

5

There were times when Smuts, musing on the past, compares the exploits of Lawrence and his Arabs with what his Boers did in the Cape.

He happens, indeed, to be in the position to make the comparison since the Palestine campaign was a matter which specially concerned him in his War Cabinet days. In 1916 Smuts became a British general. Next year he was offered the Palestine command. He refused the command but interested himself in the campaign.

'I considered the Palestine campaign', he says, 'in the light of what I had learnt in the Boer War. For instance, flank attacks. . . . That was, in fact, what we wanted the Arabs for: they had to harass the flanks of the Turks and disturb their communications. I liked the idea of Lawrence, too, for I myself had gone to the Cape to organise a revolt, and I knew what guerrilla war could be. When there were doubts about the two hundred thousand pounds a month Lawrence wanted to keep the Arabs sweet (£200,000 in

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gold!) I said: "Give him a chance . . ." I believe in experiment. I believe in the unusual. . . . As it turned out, I was wrong. We had to pay the Arabs those two hundred thousand pounds in gold every month for their friendship, and they let us down. They could have had paper from us by the million—everybody else took paper—but they insisted on gold (it was like giving blood) and then their expedition failed.

'Yes, I think one might say that expedition failed. There were a few minor successes and certainly the Arabs did very well out of the war—they got whole kingdoms for doing extremely little. But, after all, the restoration of the Arabs was not the main object of the Palestine campaign. Precisely what had to be done was not done. To destroy the Turkish communications we had to blow up the Yarmuk bridges. That was the point of the whole affair. And they could and should have been destroyed. But they were not destroyed. The bridges were not blown up.

'I don't blame Lawrence himself about the bridges. I have always admired Lawrence. I had faith in him at the time. He looked like a woman, but he was a determined and ruthless man. After his Arabs failed, he went back and tried to blow the bridges up himself. But, of course, it was all over by then. There was nothing further to be done. That particular enterprise had miscarried. We had forgotten that one could not do with hireling Arabs, however romantic they seemed to Lawrence (I never saw any romance in them myself), what one could do with one's own people. At least, I had forgotten.

'It is when I think of the romance which now attaches to the Arab revolt against the Turks that my heart particularly goes out to my own people. We thought nothing of what we did, but we went into the Cape—between two and three hundred of us—without the support of a great

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army, without two hundred thousand pounds of gold a month, without money at all, without anything except our horses and what they carried, and we opposed, not the Turks, but a world power. As much money as the Arabs had to play with every two and a half months was all the whole nation possessed to maintain a war for nearly three years against the greatest people of the day.

'When we lost our horses and exhausted our ammunition, when our clothes fell from our bodies, we had to fight for more. We drew a large army, under a distinguished commander, away from our harassed comrades in the north, and not only held our own against it but improved our situation. At the end of seven months in the Cape our numbers were increased tenfold, and we were besieging a British town and calling on it to surrender. That was the last military event of the Boer War, the siege of O'okiep.'

Chapter XXI

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I

In January of 1902, about the time Smuts was on his three-hundred-mile desert ride, the Government of the Netherlands made an appeal to the Government of England. 'The exceptional circumstances in which one of the belligerent parties in South Africa is situated', it said, 'prevent it from placing itself in communication with the other party by direct means, and constitute one of the causes of the continuance of this war, which continuously and without interruption or termination, harasses that country, and which is the cause of so much misery.' It pointed out that the Boers fighting in South Africa were isolated from the rest of the world, that their representatives in Europe could not communicate with the leaders in South Africa, and that therefore, both in South Africa and Europe, the Boers were helpless. It offered to mediate.

The Lord Lansdowne who, in 1917, so disturbed the Allies by his letter to the *Daily Telegraph* (later quoting a speech by Smuts and urging negotiation with Germany when the Allies were determined on a Thorough Policy) was in 1902 the British Foreign Secretary. He refused the mediation of the Netherlands Government, but suggested instead direct talks between Boer and British representatives in South Africa. In March Kitchener communicated this suggestion to Schalk Burger, Acting President of the South African

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Republic that was no more, and arrangements were made for a meeting.

The war was still going at fullest capacity on both sides when a number of Boers were given a safe conduct through the British lines to come to negotiations. De Wet was near Pretoria. Steyn was in de la Rey's camp in the Western Transvaal. Botha was two hundred and fifty miles to the east, Smuts six hundred miles to the west. These were the days, not of aeroplanes or even motor cars, but of horses, carts and trains. For two months during April and May, commandos met to confer, Boer envoys rushed about with safe conducts, everywhere the warmest British hospitality awaited them (even the utmost delicacy), no mistakes were made, and without abatement the war went on.

On April 6th, even while Smuts was bombarding O'okiep, the Boers met in pursuance of what Schalk Burger called an 'invitation from England to the two Republics to discuss the question of peace'. On the night of April 12th, as the British and Boers were conferring at Kitchener's house, Smuts made his principal assault on O'okiep.

He was summoned to Pretoria on April 26th. When the British officers brought the dispatch he spoke to them awhile, and then walked away, alone, into the veld. He had to go to Port Nolloth, a port in Namaqualand near O'okiep, and the only west coast port before Cape Town. At railway stations on the way British guards of honour met him. On the ship officers and men offered him their most respectful courtesy. From Cape Town he had to go north again by rail; and at a station in the Cape Colony French called to see him, telling him how he had been on that train Smuts had spared below the Stormbergen; and in the Free State Kitchener met him, riding on his black charger, with his smart officers and his Pathans in their Eastern dress, carrying scimitars. Strange this brilliance must

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have seemed to the Boers, accustomed to the dingy second-hand wear of defeated and dead. Kitchener told Smuts he had four hundred thousand troops in South Africa against the Boers' eighteen thousand, he said he was anxious for the war to stop and he offered to be generous if the Boers surrendered.

2

To the conference the Boers held on April 6th there came, among others, the three Boer commandants: Botha, the chief, de Wet and de la Rey.

They told how Kitchener's blockhouses were ruinous to them; how food was scarce (in certain districts no grain and hardly a sheep; in the whole of one district, said Botha, only twenty cattle); how without horses they could not fight; how the men had no clothes; how the natives were here with them, and here against them.

They agreed 'to make certain proposals to Lord Kitchener . . . as a basis for further negotiations, with the object of establishing the desired peace.'

On the 12th the two Republican Governments arrived by separate trains, to meet Kitchener at his house in Pretoria.

Steyn, the President of the Free State, was there, stiffening the Boers, as ever, to further resistance. After the first year or so it was in fact the Free Staters who insisted on going on with the war (saying they would, if necessary, fight alone) and not the Transvaalers, on whose behalf the war had been begun.

Yet it was not merely a matter of courage. The Free State had less to lose by continuing the war than the Transvaal. Whatever happened, it would remain in essence a Boer State. The Transvaal might not. While the Boers fought, the Uitlanders sat. They had come back when Roberts annexed the Transvaal. They were now in undis-

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puted control of the country. They formed an element that drew Boer from Boer. The 'Hands-uppers', the surrendering Boers, looked towards them as the real power, and also the National Scouts, those Boers who were working on behalf of the English. It was not inconceivable that one day these Uitlanders—with them the deserting Boers—would seem to be the true citizens of the country, and the warrior Boers, wandering ragged on the veld, fighting for their food, escaping from their enemies, mere outlaws. That really, the fighting Boers found, would be an unbearable irony, such an end to themselves, their nation and their dreams.

Steyn told Kitchener at once that their object in coming was that for which they had fought until this moment. 'Must I understand from what you say', asked Kitchener, 'that you wish to regain your independence?' 'Yes,' said Steyn, 'the people must not be reduced to such a condition as to lose their self-respect and be placed in such a position that they will feel themselves humiliated in the eyes of the British.'

The reply of the man whose face launched a million soldiers is unexpected in its delicate sympathy. Kitchener answered: 'But that could not be; it is impossible for a people that has fought as the Boers have done to lose their self-respect; and it is just as impossible for Englishmen to regard them with contempt. . . .'

Milner came to the conference next day. He contradicted the rumours that, as he heard, were going about concerning his attitude to the Boers. He was not, he said, ill disposed to the Boers. Steyn answered him, as three years ago Kruger had done, maddening him about independence—all the time about independence. And then, added Steyn, the Boer representatives had constitutionally no power to make peace without consulting their people.

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Kitchener wondered whether the people, like Steyn himself, would simply go on talking about their independence, and what the use of that would be. He communicated, however, with Chamberlain, mentioning the matter of the plebiscite and asking on what terms the British Government would accept surrender.

Chamberlain answered: On the terms Botha had refused a year ago—the Middelburg terms. And these terms were laid before the Boer people. . . .

3

A month later, at a village on the Transvaal side of the Vaal River called Vereeniging, which means Union, three hundred Boers met to elect thirty delegates from each Republic. They were thin and they had veld-sores and many of them wore clothes made of sacks and skins. Kitchener had tents pitched for them all, and in the middle was a large tent which was to accommodate the sixty representatives. Everyone made speeches, candidates were nominated, it took a day before the delegates were duly elected. General Hertzog was among those elected for the Orange Free State. Smuts, representing no Transvaal or Free State commandos, was not a delegate, but he was called in, by agreement between Kitchener and Botha, as commandant of the forces in the Cape Colony.

The matter the conference had first to decide was not whether the Boers were prepared to make this or that kind of peace, but whether they were prepared to make peace at all.

4

The meetings opened and closed with prayers. The delegates told how things were in the districts from which they came. The South African Republic, said Botha, had about

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eleven thousand men—of whom only the seven thousand five hundred with horses could be used. There were two thousand five hundred families in bad condition. No food. To maintain these was their greatest problem.

In de la Rey's districts too food was scarce, but there was not actual starvation. 'If a burgher has no food he gets it from the enemy.'

In Beyers' district, the natives were, with the exception of one tribe, in rebellion against the Boers—largely because the natives' kraals were not in Kitchener's scheme of devastation and so the Boers went to the natives' kraals for food. One may imagine the feelings of Boers who had to find food in native kraals, and of natives whose food was taken from them, of necessity, without payment.

The news from the Free State was not so bad. The Basutos, said de Wet, were as well disposed as ever to the Boers, and only four hundred out of the six thousand men were not serviceable.

Smuts gave his impressions of the Cape. Despite the fact that the Boers were nowhere so fortunately placed to-day as in the Cape, his conclusions were pessimistic. The small commandos in the Cape had done well, he said, but to what ultimate purpose? It had been one of his objects in going to the Cape to find out if the Boer colonists as a whole would rise. But, because they had no horses; because, being British subjects, defeat to them meant the death of traitors, they could not rise. It had been another of his objects to find out what hopes the Republican Boers had of successful war in the Cape. He doubted whether they would ever get to the Cape. It was his final opinion that the war depended on what could be done in the Republics.

The deputies considered what could be done. 'Is there still something', asked F. W. Reitz, 'that can be offered to the enemy consistent with our independence? I think there

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is. Should we not offer the British the Witwatersrand and Swaziland? We can also sacrifice our foreign policy and say: "We desire no foreign policy, but only our internal independence." We can then become a protectorate of England. What have we got in the Witwatersrand? . . . What has the wealth of Johannesburg done for us? . . . It would be an advantage to be rid of Johannesburg. . . . We have had more loss than gain from Swaziland. As regards a protectorate, what does this mean? It means that England undertakes the obligation to defend the country against foreign attacks. As to our foreign policy, only difficulties have originated out of that for us.'

After days of talk the Boer offer to Milner and Kitchener was made in these terms of Reitz' speech.

5

The Boers are natural orators and they were even better orators at Vereeniging than they are to-day. Why is the speech of primitive people more like literature than the speech of people who know too much? Perhaps civilisation is bad for oratory. Perhaps the reason why the misspelt sentences of a few centuries ago are so often literature and the writings of our day are so often not literature is that with us transport—not only of goods, but of words—is so easy, and words and thoughts are passed round till they are soiled with handling and weary of their life. Hear the common language of the Kaffir—how much nearer poetry it is than the language of journalists, teachers, diplomats or business men. In the time of the translators of the Bible the common language of the people too was near poetry. One has but to compare what a board of bishops would make of a translation of Hebrew and Greek poetry to-day with what a board of bishops did in King James' time, to know that this must be so. What other explanation can there be? The people of

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England, as long as they knew no language but the language of their ancestors—and then as long as they knew no writing but that of the Bible, nor any poetry but the rhythms of the Bible's primitive poets—spoke something like literature, quite possibly, all the time. So too did the Bible-reading Boers who met at Vereeniging. At their last gathering at Vereeniging they all stood up, one after the other, to unpack their hearts of words. Even at this gathering that began on May the fifteenth, which was not yet the climax of their drama, there were some whose words sprang above the earth.

Mrs. Smuts' brother set them down and one of the translators of the first Afrikaans Bible edited them. Here are a few sentences from Schalk Burger's oration: 'If one of you is attached to his independence, I am too. . . . If anyone has sacrificed everything and is prepared to sacrifice still more, I am prepared to do so. Some say: "We must keep our independence or continue to fight. We can continue to fight for another six months or nine months or a year." But supposing we did that. What would we gain thereby? Only this, that the enemy would be stronger and we weaker. If I consider everything, I must say it seems impossible to prosecute the war any longer. . . . Have we not now arrived at that stage where we should pray: "Thy will be done"? . . . We were proud and despised the enemy, and is it not perhaps God's will to humble us and cast down the pride in us by allowing us to be oppressed by the British people? . . . I say it would be criminal of us to continue the struggle till everything is destroyed and everyone dead if we are now convinced it is hopeless to struggle. Our people do not deserve to be annihilated.' . . .

The general tone of the speeches was that the Orange Free State wished to continue the war and the Transvaal did not.

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Finally Smuts and General Hertzog with the two State Presidents reduced the sense of the meeting to the proposal made by F. W. Reitz: (1) to give up independence as far as foreign relations were concerned; (2) to agree to British supervision over their internal self-government; (3) to cede a portion of their territory—notably the Rand and Swaziland; (4) to enter into a defensive alliance with Great Britain. And Botha, de Wet, de la Rey, General Hertzog and Smuts presented them to Milner and Kitchener. The five emissaries did not for a moment suppose that England would accept their offer. But they went—well, to do the thing Milner so much hated—to bargain, and Milner said at once that he foresaw no hope for good results from negotiations on such a basis. ‘I have no hesitation in taking it upon myself to reject your proposals.’

Smuts argued that the proposals did not greatly differ from the Middelburg proposals Kitchener had offered Botha in March 1901 and Botha had rejected.

Milner: It may be that I do not quite understand your proposals; but they appear to me to differ from the Middelburg scheme here set forth not only in details but in principle. . . .

Smuts: I had thought that the vital principle for your Government was to get the independence out of the way. And here the independence of the two Republics, as far as foreign relations are concerned, is given away. I therefore thought that possibly the two parties would come to an arrangement on that basis. . . .

Milner: I did my best to get new proposals from you. But you would not make them. You forced the British Government to make proposals.

Botha: I am of opinion that both parties should co-operate.

Milner: The British Government said: ‘We are desirous

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of peace; will you make other proposals?' You said: 'No, we have no authority to do so without consulting the people.' We admitted that argument. Then you said: 'Let the British Government make proposals.' The British Government did so (the Middelburg terms) and are equally entitled to an answer. What is the position you place Lord Kitchener and me in? You return with entirely new proposals and say nothing of ours. . . .

Smuts: The independence is abandoned as far as foreign relations are concerned and, with reference to the internal government, that is placed under the supervision of the British Government. So that the effect of these two clauses is: that the independence is abandoned and that the two Republics cannot after that be considered as sovereign states.

Milner: I understand very well that they would not be sovereign states, but my mind is not clear enough to be able to say what they would virtually be.

Kitchener: They would be a new kind of 'International Animal'.

Smuts: As history teaches us, it has happened before that questions were solved by compromises. And this draft proposal is as near as we can come to colonial government. . . .

It will be seen from these few lines how characteristic of the future were the contributions of Botha and Smuts.

Botha: I am of opinion that both parties should co-operate.

Smuts: As history teaches us, it has happened before that questions were solved by compromises.

Lord Shaw (now Lord Craigmile) of Dunfermline gives an account of the meeting which Smuts is said to have authorised. 'They discussed far into the night. Lord Milner was obdurate—I think Smuts' words were: "He was impossible!" When all hope seemed lost, Smuts felt himself

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gripped by the elbow, and, looking round, he saw Lord Kitchener, who whispered to him: "Come out, come out for a little." The two of them left the conference and they paced outside backwards and forwards through the dark.

'Kitchener and Smuts were both aware of the accumulating horror of a long guerrilla warfare. They were both sincerely anxious for an arrangement. And then Kitchener said to him:

"Look here, Smuts, there is something on my mind that I want to tell you. I can only give it you as my opinion, but my opinion is that in two years' time a Liberal Government will be in power; and if a Liberal Government comes into power, it will grant you a constitution for South Africa."

'Said Smuts: "That is a very important pronouncement. If one could be sure of the likes of that, it would make a great difference."

"As I say," said Kitchener, "it is only my opinion, but honestly I *do* believe that that will happen."

"That", said General Smuts to me, "accomplished the peace. We went back and the arrangements at the conference were definitely concluded and the war came to a close."

6

'If one could be sure of the likes of that.' Was Smuts really so sure (and in such words) of the likes of that—so reliant on Kitchener's political prescience—indeed, his prophetic infallibility—that those few sentences of Kitchener's as they paced backwards and forwards through the dark 'accomplished the peace'?

He smiles a little at the thought.

'Well, the peace had to be accomplished, you know.'

It may be remembered that, for Botha, Campbell-

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Bannerman's three words 'methods of barbarism' accomplished the peace.

These simple Boers!

The delegates carried back to Vereeniging the British terms. They were, in effect, the Middelburg terms which Botha had fifteen months before rejected. . . .

This is how Galsworthy's play *Strife* ends: The Strike is over and masters and men are alike desolated. Finally they make a settlement.

'Tench (to Harness): D'you know, sir—these terms, they're the very same we drew up together, you and I, and put to both sides before the fight began? All this—all this—and—and what for?

'Harness: That's where the fun comes in.'

7

Everyone, English and Dutch, knew that whether the words to which one made tribute were the satisfying words of Kitchener or Campbell-Bannerman, the peace had to be accomplished according to the dictation of Milner. Milner said his terms were final and he wanted an answer in three days.

The last meeting at Vereeniging was terrible and beautiful. The independence of the Boers was dead. They knew it and their final arguments were—consciously—funeral orations.

'It is my custom', said de la Rey, 'to speak briefly. I do not use three words where one is sufficient. . . . I do not wish to shut my ears and eyes to facts. If there is deliverance for the Afrikaner people, then I am with them, and if a grave must be dug for that people, then I go into it with them. You can talk and decide here as you choose, but I tell you that this meeting is the end of the war.

'Yet the end may come in an honourable or in a dishon-

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ourable way. If we decide to continue the war without grounds before us, the end will be a dishonourable one.

'You speak of faith. What is faith? Faith is: "Lord, *thy* will be done"—not my will. . . .'

Botha spoke:

'What chance have we of persevering? If in two years' time we have been reduced from sixty thousand men to a fourth of that number, to what number shall we have sunk in another two years? . . . Let us use our reason and not stand in relation to each other as two parties. Let us try to find a common way. . . . I am of opinion that it will be better for us to accept these terms than to surrender unconditionally. Our cup is bitter, but do not let us make it more bitter still. If we are convinced that our cause is hopeless, it is a question whether we have the right to allow one more burgher to be shot. Our object must be to act in the interests of our people.'

Smuts spoke. He eased their hearts by telling them what indeed was the truth: that, as soldiers, they were not defeated, but that they must not let themselves be wiped out as a nation. 'Hitherto', he said, 'I have not taken part in the discussion, although my views are not unknown to my Government. . . . These are great moments for us, perhaps the last time when we meet as a free people and a free Government. Let us rise to the magnitude of the opportunity and arrive at a decision for which the future Afrikaner generations will bless and not curse us. The great danger before this meeting is that it will come to a decision from a purely military point of view. . . . If we consider it only as a military matter, then I must admit we can still go on with the struggle. We are still an unvanquished military force. We have still eighteen thousand men in the field, veterans, with whom you can do almost any work. . . .

'But we are not here as an army. We are here as a people.

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We have not only a military question, but also a national matter to deal with. No one here represents his own commando. Everyone here represents the Afrikaner people, and not only that portion which is still in the field, but also those who are already under the sod and those who will live after we have gone. We represent not only ourselves, but also the thousands who are dead and have made the last sacrifice for their people, the prisoners of war scattered all over the world and the women and children who are dying out by thousands in the concentration camps of the enemy: we represent the blood and tears of an entire nation.

‘They call upon us, from the prisoner-of-war camps, from the concentration camps, from the grave, from the field and from the womb of the future, to decide wisely and to avoid all meanness which may lead to decadence and extermination of the Afrikaner people, and thus frustrate the objects for which they made all their sacrifices. Hitherto we have not continued to struggle aimlessly. We did not fight merely to be shot. We commenced the struggle, and continued it to this moment, because we wished to maintain our independence, and were prepared to sacrifice everything for it. But we may not sacrifice the Afrikaner people for that independence. . . . What reasonable chance is there still to retain our independence? We have now fought for about three years without a break. Without deceiving ourselves we can say that we have exerted all our powers and employed every means to further our cause. We have given thousands of lives, we have sacrificed all our earthly goods; our cherished country is one continuous desert; more than twenty thousand women and children have already died in the concentration camps of the enemy. Has all this brought us nearer to our independence? . . . If no deliverance comes from elsewhere, we must certainly succumb. . . .’

PEACE

He analysed the political developments in America and Europe during the last two years and their hopes of such deliverance. It was here he spoke the ironical words already recorded: 'For us the foreign situation is and remains that we enjoy much sympathy, for which we are, of course, heartily thankful. That is all we get, nor shall we receive anything more for many years. Europe will sympathise with us till the last Boer hero lies in his last resting place, till the last Boer woman has gone to her grave with a broken heart, till our entire nation shall have been sacrificed on the altar of history and humanity.'

'Comrades, we decided to stand to the bitter end. Let us now, like men, admit that that end has come for us, come in a more bitter shape than we ever thought. For each one of us death would have been a sweeter and a more welcome end than the step which we shall now have to take. But we bow to God's will. The future is dark, but we shall not relinquish our courage and our hope and our faith in God. No one will ever convince me that the unparalleled sacrifices laid on the altar of Freedom by the Afrikaner people will be vain and futile. The war of freedom of South Africa has been fought, not only for the Boers, but for the entire people of South Africa. The result of that struggle we leave in God's hand. Perhaps it is his will to lead the people of South Africa through defeat and humiliation and even the valley of the shadow of death to a better future and a brighter day.'

On May the 31st of 1902, two alternative resolutions were put before the delegates at Vereeniging: (1) against peace; (2) for peace. Peace was adopted by fifty-four votes to six. They wept as they signed the resolution. Smuts did not vote, nor is his name on the resolution the sixty signed:

"This meeting is of opinion that there is no reasonable

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ground to expect that by carrying on the war the People will retain their independence, and considers that, under the circumstances, the People are not justified in proceeding with the war, since such can only tend to the social and material ruin, not only of ourselves, but also of our posterity.

‘Forced by the above-mentioned circumstances and motives, this Meeting instructs both Governments to accept the proposal of His Majesty’s Government and to sign the same on behalf of the People of both the Republics.’

The name of Smuts—since he was no delegate—is not on the document.

Chapter XXII

'MY SOUL IS WEARY OF MY LIFE'

I

The war was over—the exhilaration of the struggle that to this day seems to Smuts the happiest time of his life. Fundamentally he had always known the war must be lost—before its beginning, and during the early victories, and through the dream of blowing up the mines, and as he called upon the Western Transvaal to stand again, and on his ride to the Cape, and while he seemed to triumph there, and certainly whenever he confronted Milner. He had known it must be lost and, fighting with all his strength, had been ready always for peace. Now peace was here and it was an acrid taste in the mouth as of verdigris. . . . There must have been greater sorrow on November 11th of 1918 than at any time during the war—even for those who were victorious, since on November 11th of 1918 the babbling strength of fever was gone and one knew. . . .

In the last week of Boer independence Smuts had become thirty-two, and for longer than he now cares to admit he felt his life to be meaningless. He was back in Pretoria—no more State Attorney, but again a junior at the Transvaal Bar. His wife was back, whom he had seen once since the middle of 1900. She weighed seven stone, and spoke of herself henceforth as a 'Boer woman, just a Boer woman like my ancestors. . . .'

'I went to South Africa', said Mr. Ramsay MacDonald



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AND MRS. SMUTS' BROTHER, 1902

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fifteen years later in the House of Commons (when Smuts was a member of the British War Cabinet and the night before he had been honoured at a banquet in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords and the greatest in England and his distinguished enemies of other times came to praise him), 'and I found myself one night under a roof that had been battered and broken and smashed by our army. I was the guest of a man who had some very precious domestic possessions, including a very fine classical and legal library.

'He took me by the hand when I went into his house, and, almost heart-broken, pointed out to me how his books had been used during his absence, and how the leaves had been torn out and left charred and burned, having been used for lighting pipes and cigars by soldiers.

'My heart was full of indignation because in those days I was called a pro-Boer and I had suffered the humiliation and indignity of having meetings broken up, and his heart was full of indignation because he had been leading against us in the field and had been one of the most successful generals against us and his cause seemed lost.

'My host in 1902,' concluded Mr. Ramsay MacDonald—while the House cheered and another Labour member cried out 'More thanks to Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman than to you who cheer'—'My host in 1902 was your guest of last night within your walls.' And when, after the Great War, Milner came with Lady Milner to South Africa and visited the Smutses at Irene, Mrs. Smuts gave them, as she says, 'just our Boer food that we always eat. They were very nice. They said they liked our Boer food.'

2

Smuts, however, knew as little as Job in the days of his affliction that the Lord had it in mind ultimately to give him twice as much as he had before. Baron Milner of St.

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James's and Cape Town, Viscount Milner since the signing of peace, sat now in triumph in Johannesburg—High Commissioner of the Cape Colony, Governor of the new Crown Colonies—the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal. He had brought out to assist him in the work of reconstruction that brilliant group of young Oxford men known as Milner's kindergarten, of whom one, Patrick Duncan, has been for half of the last generation Smuts' political lieutenant. In January 1903 Chamberlain came to inspect for himself England's new territory—five years too late, says Smuts, to see that the Boers were not savage monsters.

The leaders of the Boers came to welcome Chamberlain publicly and to speak about the things that mattered to them: their language rights, war taxation, an amnesty for the rebels ('their crime is ours', said Smuts), the essential inequality of the native. They identified themselves with Chamberlain's object 'to reconcile the races and to bring contentment and prosperity to South Africa'. They only begged him, said Smuts, 'to think what we have been, that we have been a free people, that we have been the freest people on earth. . . .' Chamberlain, granting them the things they asked, pointing out that 'never in the history of the world had a conquering nation done so much for those recently its opponents', responded: 'What are the qualities we admire in you? Your patriotism, your courage, your tenacity, your willingness to make sacrifices for what you believe to be right. . . .' So really it seemed a very successful meeting. . . .

Nevertheless, when next month Milner offered them seats on his nominated Legislative Council, Botha, de la Rey and Smuts refused. They said something about the time not having yet come for popular representative institutions. It would be better for them to wait, they said, until the country was settled. 'We want peace and rest.' Later they said

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that, as the Government had all the power, it should also have all the responsibility. Whatever they said, the fact remained, as a Rand paper pointed out, that, despite all the talk about co-operation, co-operation was refused. . . .

It was refused in the terms, said the paper, and according to the characteristic personality of Mr. Smuts. 'Who is Mr. Smuts? He is one of the five men chiefly responsible for the war, a man of intensely bitter feelings, a type of Afrikaner who . . . used every effort to keep the races apart. Why Mr. Smuts should have been offered an honour which, in this instance, would have been a very great honour indeed, we are at a loss to conceive. Happily his own excellent taste has expelled him from within the pale of an Assembly which, it is needless to say, would not have gained any special honour through the connection.'

It will be noticed that Smuts is described as Mr., not General, Smuts. It was not until years later that the English papers in South Africa could bring themselves to call him General Smuts.

3

Smuts, the new beginnings of his legal work apart, sat at home doing nothing. 'One lives here', he wrote to J. X. Merriman, who had succeeded Jameson as Prime Minister of the Cape, 'in an atmosphere which is entirely devoid of culture, and is frankly materialistic in the worst sense.' After an activity of twenty years, there he was, ripe for any work, his ripeness unused—soured and fermenting. It burst its confines. The man who (as his associates of those days described him) was so proud, aloof and silent, cried out, like Job:

*'My soul is weary of my life,
I will give free course to my complaint,
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.'*

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The repository of his complaint and bitterness was Miss Emily Hobhouse, a middle-aged woman who had come out to South Africa during the war to help the women and children in the concentration camps—to work for them in South Africa and to tell their story in England. The Boers venerated her and still do. Smuts shared the national feelings towards her. After the war she helped Smuts settle destitute Boer families on the land, and that was how their correspondence arose. One could not judge from Smuts' letters to her whether he was addressing a man or a woman, a young or an old one. They sound rather as though they were written to himself. They have the character of a diary.

In later years, in the time of the Great War, Miss Hobhouse became as pro-German as, during the Boer War, she had been pro-Boer—she had the sort of heart that goes out to an enemy. And she could not forgive Smuts for opposing the Germans in German West and German East Africa. 'She was very unkind to the Ou' Baas,' says Mrs. Smuts, 'and I never wrote to her again. But the Ou' Baas didn't care much. He never cares what people do to him.'

He had, indeed, the opportunity to prove this to Miss Hobhouse herself in 1904. But, of course, she had meant well.

4

What had happened was that Smuts, writing to Miss Hobhouse about the Chinese labour the Government were thinking of introducing to the Rand, writing with all a South African's resentment at having to face yet another colour problem added to his already abnormal anger, one day abandoned himself completely to paper, and Miss Hobhouse, without consulting him, put his letter in *The Times*—naturally, with the best possible motives. And there it

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was, unconsidered, unbalanced, exaggerated, for all the world to read, resent and smile at.

'That a large proportion of the Boers are apathetic is no doubt true; but they are people who have lost all hope and heart; who are prepared to see this Government do anything in the Transvaal; who see that the course of the administration is, in spite of all warnings and remonstrances, directed towards ruin and disaster. Naturally to such people (and I sometimes think they are right) the importation of Chinese labour is but an incident.

'But truly *such* apathy ought to give Lord Milner even greater pangs than the fiercest opposition. For beneath this apathy there burns in the Boer mind a fierce indignation against this sacrilege of Chinese importation—this spoliation of the heritage for which the generations of the people have sacrificed their all. Often when I think of what is happening now all over South Africa, my mind stands still—for the folly, the criminality of it all, is simply inconceivable. The spirit of South Africa is crushed by the disappointment, the ruin, the losses of the past. And in this dire distress when as a people we ought, so to say, to be in hospital, we are turned adrift and the wild beasts (you know whom I mean) are let loose on us. I sometimes ask myself whether South Africa will ever rise again; whether English statesmen will ever dare to be liberal and generous in South Africa. They, however, ought to know what is best for the British Empire. An awakening will come some day; but I am afraid it may come too late to save either South Africa or the British Empire.

'You must not blame me too much for sitting still and doing nothing. There is a strong desire in me and in all of us to do something; but what? There seems to be nothing in common between our ideals of public policy and those of the authorities. *We* think that government must be for

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the greatest good of the greatest number; *they* think that the mining industry must be saved at all costs. And it cannot and will not be saved, for the major part of it is bogus and a sham. If all the mines which have no reasonable chance of working at a profit (that is about 80 per cent of them) were allowed to go to the bankruptcy court, the country would once more return to a normal condition, there will be more than sufficient labour for the 20 per cent which *can* be worked at a profit; the Transvaal will cease to be the happy hunting-ground of the fraudulent company promoter, and all will be well. Now, however, we have a bogus gold industry, its reputation is kept going for the purpose of still further swindling the investing public of Europe, the general good of the country, and I may say of South Africa, is sacrificed for this sham industry—and so we are merrily spinning along to perdition. Well, they call me cynical and bitter. But do you think it possible to keep your temper sweet and serene under such provocation? These people have never loved their country or felt a passion for it in any shape or form. South Africa they regard with unconcealed contempt—a black man's country, good enough to make money or a name in, but not good enough to be born or to die in. What is there in common between such people and the Boer, the fibres of whose very soul are made of this despised soil? And, if there is nothing in common, how can you help them with advice or otherwise? Hence I prefer to sit still, to water my orange trees, and to study Kant's *Critical Philosophy* until in the whirligig of time new openings for doing good offer themselves. . . .

'Lord Milner's heart will be thumping with holy joy. For he has dreamed a dream of a British South Africa—loyal with broken English and happy with a broken heart—and he sees the dream is coming true. . . .

'I see the day coming when British South Africa will

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appeal to the Dutch to save them from the consequences of their insane policy of to-day. And I fear—I sometimes fear with an agony bitterer than death—that the “Dutch” will no more be there to save them or South Africa. For the Dutch too are being undermined and demoralised by disaster and despair and God only knows how far this process will yet be allowed to go on.’

The letter appeared in *The Times* of March the 15th, 1904.

5

There can seldom have been so young a letter written by a statesman. Smuts was now thirty-four. He had arrived at an age where good is not enhanced, nor evil mitigated, by immaturity. A man of thirty-four is judged by the unyielding standard of manhood.

He wrote like a boy of nineteen. Gone was the philosophical disputant, the analyst of Walt Whitman, the frigid State Attorney, the negotiator with the British agent, the saving guardian of state funds, the guerrilla commander, fearing nothing, and unmoved (as he believed) by the sight of death. Smuts wrote, at the age of thirty-four, like a young man betrayed at his first encounter with life. . . .

There were things in Smuts' letter seriously damaging to him—and they damaged him. There were other things ridiculously damaging to him—and they damaged him—perhaps more.

He wrote himself to Miss Hobhouse: ‘A tremendous sensation was created last week by the cables of my letter which you had published. As later letters were hostile to Lord Milner and their publication would have meant my enforced departure from this country, I took the precaution of warning you against further publication.

‘On the whole I feel sorry that the letter was published, as I would have expressed myself more cautiously had I known

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it would be published. As it is, it appears exaggerated and unfair. To say that the financiers are swindlers and that 80 per cent of the mines are insolvent is scarcely an excusable exaggeration. I have kept quiet and said nothing, although the papers came to me for an explanation. The financiers are naturally furious and I am afraid our hitherto easy relations will henceforth be very embittered. Lord Milner is said to be very pleased, as the letter confirms his view that I am the great Irreconcilable still at large in his blessed satrapy.

'I am very much afraid that, all unwittingly, I have crossed the Rubicon and that I shall have to fight for dear life very soon. However, providence has endowed me with a fair share of confidence, and I hope to have better luck than in some previous undertakings.'

A few weeks later he wrote: 'I did not mind the publication of my letter particularly.

'I may, however, tell you that at Johannesburg it raised a storm of execration against me the force of which is not yet spent and that the question of expelling me was seriously considered in high quarters. I am already the best-hated man on the Boer side and I am afraid my opportunities for doing good are being seriously limited by my evil reputation.'

The publication of the letter did him harm, indeed, not only as a public man but as a man beginning again his professional career and having to work for his livelihood. He knew it did him harm. Yet worse than the harm to a sensitive man—with a reputation for coldness and cynicism—were the amused references to Smuts' watering his orange trees and studying Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. For years these went on, and comic drawings were made of Smuts with a watering can in one hand and a volume of Kant in the other. 'We are spinning merrily to perdition'—he never heard the end of that. . . . 'The bogus industry', 'the sham

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industry' (which sooner or later everyone had to admit to be the mainstay of South Africa)—he certainly never heard the end of that. Lord Milner's heart must have thumped with holy joy for more reasons than one. Sir Owen Seaman found still another aspect in his letter to ridicule. There was a poem in *Punch* not very prophetic of this one he wrote twenty years later:

*And now you've come from oversea
And said the actual things you felt,
Speaking a language large and free
As are the winds that wash your veldt.*

In 1904 also Smuts was saying the things he felt. The language was only too large and free. That was the trouble. *Litera scripta manet*. . . .

Yet even here was an occasion for Smuts to show his character. He bore the ridicule without comment, he made no reply to the criticism, he suffered the professional injury, the public hilarity—Miss Hobhouse remained the repository of his broodings, and he never, by a word, reproached her for her well-meaning, most culpable impetuosity.

The correspondence faded when Smuts' brooding days passed over, but Smuts was until her death, and despite the German East disagreement, Miss Hobhouse's friend.

6

This is the poem Sir Owen Seaman wrote in *Punch* about Smuts' letter in 1904:

I

*A breast with brazen corset trebly fitted
And a superb capacity of jaw
Needs must he have who lets himself be pitted
Against a Dutch interpreter of Law;*

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*But he should be one stolid mass of gristle,
Tough as Brazil's impenetrable nuts,
Who dares to cope with your expert epistle,
General Smuts.*

2

*You view, I see, with undisguised aversion,
Bred of the faith that fires a patriot's blood,
Your precious country's probable immersion
Beneath a putrid stream of Pagan mud;
You see her heritage—the obvious fruit of
Your sires' sublime contempt for worldly ease—
Wrung from its rightful ends and made the loot of
Heathen Chinese. . . .*

3

*But what (inform me) was the actual juncture
At which your parents ceased to plough the land,
And lent their estimable thews to puncture
The hollow shafts that permeate the Rand?
I always thought they entertained a rooted
Distrust of dirty lucre's devious tracks,
And found their exploration better suited
To sinful blacks.*

4

*Misled by some outlandish Ananias,
I fancied you abhorred that hellish toil,
Content, by processes that passed for pious,
To pocket, indirectly, half the spoil,
While he, the godless nigger (so I gathered),
Sought to elude, inside those pits of sin,
Your Christian siambok which would else have lathered
His sable skin.*

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5

*Now lifted up with bellicose elation,
Puffed out with perquisites, and blown with beans,
He looks on labour as an occupation
Unfitted to a gentleman of means;
Posed loosely, in a careless state of coma,
Upon his torpid back or turgid tum,
He lies enveloped by a rich aroma
Of plug and rum.*

6

*Sir, on the soil that drank our tears and treasure,
That Promised Land, a Paradise on Earth,
Are we to wait upon his Highness' Pleasure—
Wait till the brute resumes his ancient girth?
Can it be he, I ask, and not another,
Whose stolen heritage your bosom stirs?
Is it, in fact, to him as man and brother
Your note refers?*

7

*Do you protest against imported labour
And mention sacrifices made in vain
Simply because you hope your Kaffir neighbour
Will, by and by, consent to work again?
I may not plumb these deep forensic levels,
But all my native commonsense rebuts
The bare idea that you're that lazy Devil's
Advocate, Smuts!*

The poem is quoted in full to show, not merely the derisive resentment Smuts' letter aroused, but also a certain English attitude prevailing in those days towards everything South African—the Boers, the natives, the Chinamen, the

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gold, the war. The references to the godless nigger 'posed loosely, in a careless state of coma, Upon his torpid back or turgid tum', so luxuriously placed in the economic scale as not to need to work, have no apparent connection with Smuts' letter. But they have connection with the mine-owners' explanation of why Chinese had to be imported into South Africa and also with an Open Letter signed by Botha.

In this letter are stated all the Boer grievances against the new English régime (children being anglicised, Reparation Department 'a complete and dismal failure', Milner's glowing despatches 'nothing more than a fairy tale'), and the native question and Chinese labour are prominent. The reason, it says, why 'the cry is all for cheap Chinese labour' is that the natives, full of their war-time money, sit in idleness waiting for the millennium promised them by the English. . . . 'We are convinced', says the letter, 'of the utter selfishness of these magnates, as well as of their stupidity and want of foresight in all matters of politics. . . . The Transvaal Government is almost completely dictated to by the magnates. The whole policy of the Government is inspired by fear and distrust . . . the Transvaal of to-day is in a most unhappy temper.'

The letter, as may be seen, voices the sentiments of Smuts. It happens also to have been written by Smuts.

7

The letters Smuts wrote to Miss Hobhouse are no less full of the Chinese question. 'It is certain that the Chinese are coming—more disaster for the country' (16.12.03). 'The country seems to be verging on public bankruptcy. . . . You know the cause. Well, the cure is now Chinese' (8.2.04). 'John Chinaman will certainly come. We are so miserably weak, so utterly helpless. We could not even derail the first train coming here with a batch of celestials. We can molest,

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but what is the earthly good of that? Anyhow, I am myself beginning to deteriorate, for, after all, I shall have to descend to the ranks of the molesters. . . . Do you think it likely that, if the Liberals get into power, they will stop Chinese importation? If they don't, God alone will help us! There is more to be feared from the despair than from the hopes of brave men' (13.5.04). 'Here are the fettered Chinamen with a fate awaiting them worse than that of the galley slaves of the pirate Bey of Tunis who flourished in the palmy days of slavery. Here are the birds of prey voraciously feeding on the corpse of liberty. . . .

'I see no ray of light in the future' (6.5.04).

Chapter XXIII

CELESTIAL MESSENGERS

I

He saw no ray of light. Yet, most appropriately, it was destined that the Celestials themselves should bring a ray of light. Swept together, indentured, across the waters they came (fifteen Boer leaders protesting by cable to England, Milner dowsing the cable with his assent, England quivering over Chinese slaves, South Africa quivering over Chinese monsters). . . . They came, unrecognised by Campbell-Bannerman or Smuts or anyone else for the light-bearers they were. . . . Fifty thousand Chinamen came, the messengers of the Lord. . . .

This is the story of Chinese labour in the Transvaal:

2

When Chamberlain visited South Africa in 1903 he had to arrange for money to repair and run the new colonies. He decided on two loans. The first of thirty-five million pounds at 3 per cent was guaranteed by the Imperial Government and it was subscribed for thirty times over. The second of thirty million pounds, in three annual instalments, at 4 per cent was the Transvaal's war contribution, and the mining houses guaranteed the first ten million pounds. The money was to be used for reconstruction and Britain was to get the interest.

As it happened, the loan was never issued because things

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were going too badly in the Transvaal, and when the Liberals came in at the end of 1905 they abandoned all war claims. In the meantime, however, the thought of the liability increased the Transvaal's sense of depression. For there was only one way of getting money in the Transvaal (there is still only one way of getting money, not only in the Transvaal, but in the whole of South Africa) and that was from the mines. To get money from the mines the mines had to produce gold. To produce gold, labour was necessary. To find labour seemed beyond hope in South Africa, for the labourers of South Africa were the natives, and, as everyone was pointing out—Boers no less than mine-owners—the natives were not coming to the mines.

The reason why they were not coming was not inevitably the one stated in Botha's (or Smuts') Open Letter, which Sir Owen Seaman took up in his poem: that, enriched by the war, they were waiting at their ease for the English war promises to be fulfilled. How rich could they have become—granted they did have war work—on the two or three or even four pounds a month natives are paid in South Africa? On the skins they sold after their cattle died of the rinderpest that was still current in the Boer War? Waiting they were, but rarely at their ease. There were natives far from being 'lifted up with bellicose elation, puffed out with perquisites and blown with beans'. If their stomachs were high, if the stomachs of the children were swollen and their legs like winter twigs, it was because too often their food was roots and berries and stinking dead animals. Nobody suffered so much in the war as the natives. Eighty thousand of them were even in concentration camps.

There was, on the other hand, the story with which the Boers used to agitate one another during the war and could not forget. It ran: The day the war is over an extra place is laid at the table. For whom is this extra place? For the

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Kaffir servant. What does it mean? It means we have now equal rights.

The natives were not really waiting for equal rights. Yet some sort of idea they must have got into their heads during the war about benefits to accrue to them if England won.

Well, England won. And what happened? Before the war the natives on the mines had got forty-five shillings a month with their food and lodging. During the war, under the Republic, such as still were needed got twenty shillings, and the mines came to be looked on as a bad business, which they gave up. Now the war was over, prices were dearer, and the twenty shillings was not raised back to forty-five shillings, it was raised to thirty shillings. So much for the millennium.

The natives were shocked and they had, moreover, got out of the way of coming to the mines. When the wages were desperately put back to their pre-war figure, they still would not come. Three hundred new mining companies had been floated since the war, and there was no labour.

Dividends disappeared, shares dropped, the war contribution—so much interest to be found—loomed ahead, Milner wanted 10 per cent from the mines and on top of that improved mining conditions, the mine-owners were in despair. Some genius thought of Chinese labour. And Chamberlain backed it.

It was not a new idea in South Africa. Van Riebeck, the first Dutch Governor of the Cape, had thought of it two and a half centuries before, it had been spoken of by Cape Progressives a few years ago, there was Indian labour in Natal, and Rhodesia during the war had also thought of Chinese or Indian labour. The Transvaal itself had thought of Indian labour. But it was not a good idea.

With hundreds of thousands of natives that had only to be made to *understand*, with an urgent Indian problem not only in Natal but carried into the Transvaal itself, with

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trouble enough even between the white races, a new race was to be introduced.

The thought maddened not only the Boers, but all South Africans who owned no shares, and were not of Dr. Jameson's party in the Cape. Even Milner did not like it until his reconstruction work became endangered and it seemed as if capital and immigrants were scared of the Transvaal. By the end of the year there were forty-three thousand Chinese in the Transvaal, and more coming, and it was said (1) that they were the sweepings of gaols, spent all their spare time in opium and gambling dens, got out of their compounds to attack white girls and murder lonely farmers (they did sometimes); (2) that they were so sober and hard working that if somehow they leaked back after their indentures they would menace South African shopkeepers and traders. Whichever view one took, more and more Chinese, the clamour rose, would come, and presently South Africa's best white blood would have soaked into the earth for no purpose but to nourish an oriental nation.

In England another view was taken of the matter.

3

In England the key word was slavery. Chinamen were taken from their homes in China into mine-compounds under a contract so like slavery (said Campbell-Bannerman) as to be almost indistinguishable from slavery. For the alternatives of their sojourn in South Africa were just these: Either they had to be 'let loose over the country, in which case there would be degradation and infection of every kind, demoralisation, competition in trade and other things that were objected to, and a new race would be introduced where racial difficulties were serious enough already'; or else they had to be 'shut up and segregated from the community, and it was difficult to find where the difference lay

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between that and positive slavery. The essence of the law was that the Chinaman was a chattel.'

He described the disabilities to which the Chinese were in fact subject: special penalties; the holding of property forbidden, or work other than that specified; sent to gaol in case of desertion; unable to leave compound without permission; compelled to keep wife and family (if they came) under similar conditions; shipped back on expiration of contract. 'These are', said Campbell-Bannerman, 'uncommonly like slave laws. "Indentured labour" no doubt sounds better; but do not let us haggle over words; let us see what the thing itself is.'

The Government he criticised said that similar conditions occurred in labour ordinances passed by Liberal Governments. Its Colonial Secretary (Mr. Lyttelton) pointed out that the minimum of two shillings a day the Chinaman would get in the Transvaal was fourteen or fifteen times as much as he got in his own country. A Johannesburg clergyman remarked how much more convenient it was to christianise Chinese in Johannesburg than in China. It turned out, in fact, that, reprehensible as it was to introduce into a country like South Africa a new proletariat and a new race conflict, the Chinese themselves were quite happy in the Transvaal and greatly envied their fortunate countrymen—the excellent citizens permanently settled there. Nor were their living conditions worse than those of the indentured Indians on the Natal sugar estates, about whom no one in England greatly troubled, even though they were British subjects; and they were better than those of the natives. As for their working conditions, those would have been the same whether they were free or not. . . .

Yet what argument or consideration ever stood up against a catchword? It got into sound British hearts that the Boer War had been fought for liberty: the liberty of white and

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black and yellow. Now, having spent their blood and treasure, they were confronted with the result: slavery. Chinese slavery.

The by-elections that followed the cry of Chinese slavery went to the Liberals—Chamberlain himself blamed, not post-war exhaustion or taxes or tariff reform as much as Chinese labour on the mines, for the Conservative losses in England.

In Pretoria, Smuts, even though Chinese labour was rousing and uniting Transvaal Boers no less than English Liberals, still saw no ray of light. His gloomy letters to Miss Hobhouse continued.

4

He wrote:

'You twit me with watering my orange trees when I ought to be up and doing? What is there for me to do? I and mine belong to the vanquished, and over our country is now being written—with ink which no time will ever let fade—the brutal *vae victis* policy of the conqueror. To scream, to make a noise, even resolutely to agitate, is not in my line. South Africa is on the down grade. . . . The whole country reminds me of that gloomy line in Keats in which he speaks of "the weariness, the fever and the fret, Here where men sit and hear each other groan." In the events behind us, South Africa has been untrue to herself and now she is plucking the fruit. The heroes who ought now to man the walls lie buried under the shattered ramparts, and the attacking forces are pouring into the breach. The feeble and exhausted defenders who still survive are, in many senses, only shadows of their former selves. For their faith has been undermined. How many people in South Africa to-day will believe in justice and righteousness? . . . One's only consolation in such a scene is to watch

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the trees grow, to see how nature teems with ever new and fresh life and absorbs the evil and dreary waste of yesterday into the beauty of to-morrow' (6.5.04).

He wrote again two days later: 'I could spend all my days in peace and quiet and would far prefer that state of existence.

'Sometimes when I think over the past and my own now banished pugnacity, I wonder whether after all it would not be best for the Afrikaner people to quit the tests, resign to their British opponents, and in peacefulness and quiet to find that consolation to which they are now justly entitled after a century of fruitless strife. . . . The delicate flower fades in the scorching sun; the fine soul is ground down under the Juggernaut car; the heaven-high aspirations vanish like phantom shadows: is not that the true summary of life? One becomes sick and tired of life's toil and endless endeavour, and begins to long for rest, as somebody has expressed it. Ever since the war I have been in this mood of ennui. I wonder whether one will ever get out of it' (8.5.04).

A month later again his mood was still unchanged: 'My longing for rest is often much keener than my desire for the dissemination of truth.' And in August, in the winter of South Africa, he finally wintrified himself: 'Place me in old age among the hills and kopjes where, as a little child, I looked after the sheep and cattle and let me lie where I was raised from Mother Nature.'

5

It seems to Smuts unbelievable that he could ever have felt like this—he can hardly accept the evidence of his own letters. After the Great War—yes, then, he admits, he was in terrible mood. The six months of peace negotiations in Paris changed him, he says, for life. 'I had always been successful. My personal undertakings had always prospered.

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Even the Boer War was a fatality through which, as a man, I came out strengthened. There was something grand in the struggle that elevated me. In Paris I saw my smallness against fate, I felt how small I was, I saw there was a crack in life itself that also went through me.'

Well, thirty-two years is a long time, and he has forgotten that he felt in 1904 more exhausted even than in 1919. Unreal he may have felt in Paris, as if inconceivable things could happen both to himself and the world; anguished he may have felt. But not so bitterly lost as his letters to Miss Hobhouse declare him to have been in 1904. The sorrow of middle age is not comparable to the anguish of youth, for one knows by middle age that nothing matters so much as one long ago believed. And the sorrow of old age is a sorrow no less tired than the blood and body. 'The Boer War was a fatality through which, as a man, I came out strengthened.' An illusion. It took Smuts three years to recover from the Boer War, to become again and for ever after the man he had been before the war and during the war—whose greatness of spirit, more than any individual thing he has done, is his claim to greatness itself. Is not greatness, like art, a way of thinking?

In all Smuts' letters to Miss Hobhouse there is only one real spurt. That is in March 1904, when he says: 'If the Liberals do not immediately grant self-government to the Transvaal under such conditions that the Boers will know and feel that they are again governing themselves, an agitation will start in the country the consequences of which none can foresee. I think it will be good policy to grant the Boers everything but their flag. The danger is, if this is not done, that they will agitate for their flag. But if this is done, England will secure the loyal co-operation of all Boer leaders in the old Republics and thus render her position impregnable. I do not advocate generosity or magnanimity,

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but good, sound policy. An army of occupation won't keep the Boers down; honest and *bona fide* self-government will satisfy them and make them really contented. But are the Liberals educated up to this point? That is what I want to know from you.'

Not long after he wrote this, in the year of Kruger's death, he formed, with Botha, Schalk Burger and a dozen others, a People's Party that called itself *Het Volk* and had as its object the agitation for responsible government (which was also the object of those South African British who deprecated overseas control—the Responsible Government Party). Now and then, in the year that followed, he slightly roused himself. Speaking to the then customary colonial toast of 'the Land we Live in', he said: 'South Africa is to the Afrikander, not the land he lives *in* nor the land he lives *on*, but his own land.' Again he said: 'Until such time as we are trusted, we shall accept nothing.'

He meant they would not accept the form of representative government Lyttelton was offering them, which was hardly better, he maintained, than Crown Colony government. But even his early campaigning speeches on behalf of *Het Volk* were lifeless. For there is one thing Smuts cannot do, and that is make a good speech in a bad mood.

6

Smuts has a larger range of subject and vocabulary than anyone else in Africa, but at the best of times he cannot resist metaphor, and the danger, as he himself says, is that he doesn't know when he is making an epigram or a cliché. Immediately after the Great War, approaching and during those black days which he regards as having so lowered his spirit, memorable words poured from him:

'The tents have been struck and the great caravan of humanity is once more on the march.'

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'Europe is being liquidated, and the League of Nations must be heir to the great estate.'

'I look upon conscription as the tap root of militarism. Unless that is cut all our labours will be in vain.'

'Civilisation is one body, and we are all members of one another.'

'Russia has walked out into the night.'

In the days, on the other hand, when he believes he was strengthened by the Boer War, he was capable of uttering, within thirty-seven consecutive words, four clichés and a hackneyed Boer proverb. Here are the thirty-seven words: 'Let us bury the dead cow, and give one another our hands and help one another along the road of life. Let us wipe the slate clean and extend the hand of friendship to Boer and Briton.' And though the essence of wisdom is greater than its expression, and, in the last resort, one might argue that certain words are so linked by association as to form word assemblies no less permissible than single words, it is hard not to believe that an abandonment of individuality shows an enfeebled spirit.

It was only when Chinese slavery drove the Conservatives out of power in England and set Campbell-Bannerman and his Liberals in their place, that Smuts came alive again. The Chinese did it. Nor did they merely change the fate of a party or a person. They changed the fate of South Africa and perhaps even of the British Empire. . . .

At least, if Smuts' own view is accepted. He always says that if England had not given the Boers responsible government in 1906, Boer would not have stopped Boer from fighting England and supporting Germany in 1914. And not only would there have been a new war in South Africa, but the Germans would have had their submarine bases in German East and German West and the history of the war and the world might have been different.

Chapter XXIV

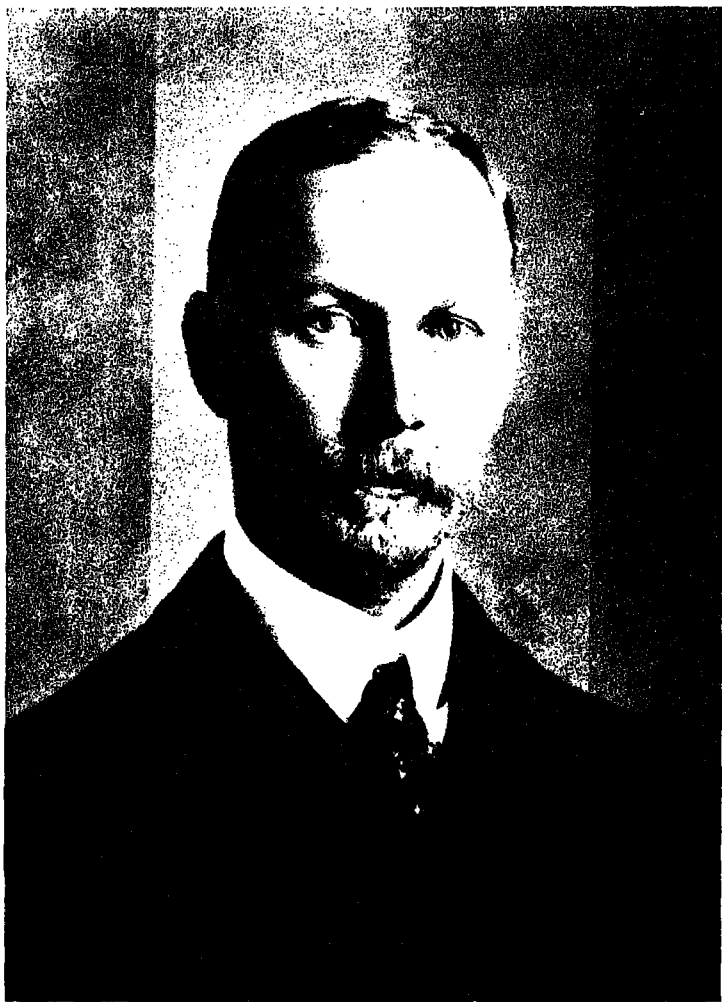
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I

As soon as Chinese labour put the Liberals in office at the end of 1905, Het Volk sent Smuts over to England to see about responsible government. He stayed at Horrex's Hotel in Norfolk Street, Strand, where Kruger too had once stayed, and told the few journalists who were interested enough to question him that his visit had no political significance: it was private. 'I love England. I was educated here.'

Nobody, of course, believed that it had no political significance, nor did Smuts expect them to do so. A few English people spoke vaguely of the machinations of these Boer emissaries. The mining people in Johannesburg said he was so 'animated by an intense hatred of the mining industry and everything connected with it that he hesitated at no slander or inaccuracy which might have the effect of alarming European investors and scaring off capital'. The Kaffir market (duly revived—could it be by the Chinese?) did, in fact, drop. Britons in Johannesburg threatened to demonstrate. Britons in England said they had not fought a three years' war to hand over control of the country to the Boers. . . .

'I went', says Smuts, 'to see Churchill, Morley, Elgin, Lloyd George and Campbell-Bannerman. The only one I had met before was Churchill. I came across him when he



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was taken prisoner at Ladysmith. He asked me if I had **ever** known of a conquered people being allowed to **govern** themselves. I said no. But we did not want to govern ourselves. We could not govern ourselves without England's assistance. And that was the truth: we could not. . . .

'Then I went to see Morley. Morley had been very pro-Boer during the war and he was one of our strongest hopes. I was shocked when he said that, if it were in his power, he would go further than I asked, but he had his colleagues to consider, and to study public opinion. I had not expected Morley to mention public opinion.

'The last man I saw was Campbell-Bannerman. I explained our position to him, and said we were anxious to co-operate with the English. He asked me why, if that were so, we had refused to join Milner's Legislative Council. I answered: What would it have led to but *friction*? A Government appointed and not elected. An angry minority of Boers with no power except that of criticism. The Lyttelton Constitution now proposed, a partly Boer Legislature under Crown Colony administration, was hardly, I said, better. There was only one thing that could make the wheels run: self-government.

'I went on explaining. I could see Campbell-Bannerman was listening sympathetically. Without being brilliant he was the sort of sane personality—large-hearted and honest—on whom people depend. He reminded me of Botha. Such men get things done. He told me there was to be a Cabinet meeting next day, and he said: "Smuts, you have convinced me."

'That talk', says Smuts, 'settled the future of South Africa.'

He heard the rest of the story from Mr. Lloyd George, who described the Cabinet meeting next day as the most wonderful in his experience. 'I have made up my mind', Campbell-Bannerman told them, 'that we must scrap the

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Lyttelton constitution and start afresh and make partners of the Boers.'

He spoke of the Boers' fight for freedom, and of how, for three years, the matter of the Chinese apart, they had given their conquerors a clear field. Such people, said Campbell-Bannerman, should be England's partners. He was full of emotion and he moved others too. They decided in a few minutes to give the Boers responsible government.

In his last diary Lord Riddell adds something to this: 'It was all done', Mr. Lloyd George told him, 'in a ten-minute speech at the Cabinet—the most dramatic, the most important ten-minute speech ever delivered in our time. In ten minutes he (Campbell-Bannerman) brushed aside all the checks and safeguards devised by Asquith, Winston and Loreburn. At the outset only two of us were with him, John Burns and myself. But his speech convinced the whole Cabinet. It was the utterance of a plain, kindly, simple man. The speech moved at least one member of the Cabinet to tears. It was the most impressive thing I ever saw.'

In the Colonial Office rested Smuts' memorandum: 'Let it be clearly understood once and for all that the Boers and their leaders do not wish to raise the question of the annexation of the new Colonies or the British flag. They accept accomplished facts.'

'That', says Smuts, 'was what Botha and I had determined when we signed the Peace of Vereeniging. We had made up our minds that it was the end of one life and the beginning of another. And what we signed we stood by.'

Within a few weeks the Lyttelton constitution was revoked and in May a Royal Commission came to Pretoria to settle the matter of responsible government.

Smuts is a tenacious man and particularly of his feelings. Neither towards individuals nor towards races do his feelings change. The feeling for the English that swept into him when Campbell-Bannerman so trusted the Boers in 1906 has been the strongest influence in Smuts' life. He speaks of that exhibition of trust as 'one of the wisest political settlements ever made in the history of the English nation', and of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman as among the great Empire Builders. It linked him for ever, he says, in love to England and set him so on his honour that he fought his own countrymen who went against England in 1914. It induced him to repudiate—as lacking a similar nobility—the Treaty of Versailles, and, in 1934, to advocate Germany's right to an equality of armaments. He has been so convinced by his own experience that to treat a conquered country generously is not only beautiful but profitable, that he does not allow for the difference between a small, attacked, helpless people to whom one makes amends, and a great, attacking, threatening people from whom one seeks safety. Being on the other hand not without cynicism, he may think it politic to yield with grace a right that has already been taken without question.

When, in 1906, it was decided to create King's Counsel in the new British territories, Smuts was among the first to accept an honour which to this day General Hertzog regards as incompatible with a South African's independence.

In December 1906 the Transvaal was given responsible government, and a few months later the Orange River Colony. 'They gave us back—in everything but name—our country. After four years. Has such a miracle of trust and magnanimity ever happened before? Only people like

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the English could do it. They may make mistakes, but they're a big people.'

The leading Johannesburg paper of the day (now dead) called it the work of 'that draper man from Glasgow—one forgets his name' recently gazetted Prime Minister. It pursued Smuts with bitterness. 'Mr. Smuts,' it reported, 'in an accent which called forth numerous entreaties that he would speak English, delivered a long anti-Chinese address which had very little to do with the resolution he was proposing. . . . 'Speak English, speak English' was, in fact, the accepted way to heckle Smuts in those days, and his reply was to agree with the hecklers: 'You are right. My English is far from flawless.'

He came to answer with greater passion two mine-owners who, having never attempted to make themselves understood in Dutch, despised Botha, 'the greatest man in South Africa', because, not having been taught English in his youth, he now, in middle age, struggled to learn it that he might get into closer touch with his English fellows.

Eighteen months earlier Milner had returned to England, and Smuts had declared his administration between 1902 and 1906 to have been 'the darkest period in the history of the Transvaal'. It was worse, he said, than the bloodshed during the war. During the war 'Boers and English were fighting for a great prize, they thought, but during the last four years they suffered for nothing'.

Milner himself considered his work during this period the best of his life. And with justice. For, whether he was right or wrong, he acted with passionate sincerity; he refused the Colonial Secretaryship to do what he believed his duty in a country that hated him for it; and, having done it, he was sent by the Liberals into the political wilderness to languish there for ten years.

He spoke out, in the House of Lords, his anger at the

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Liberals, and Smuts said his speech was enough to make it plain to any reasonable man why there was a war in South Africa.

There are, however, still diehard Englishmen in South Africa who say he spoke rightly.

The first batch of Chinese had not arrived in Johannesburg when he left, nor the last batch departed before the Union of South Africa was accomplished: his dream, Rhodes' dream, Smuts' dream. The Chinese brought prosperity back to the mines—at least it came when they came. They left no mark—unless one regards them as the source of Liberal victory, responsible government and all that followed—no mark, either for good or ill, on the country. There is nothing to see or feel of them.

Het Volk, its leaders gradually narrowed down to Botha and Smuts, accelerated its pace. The English party that once called itself the Responsible Government Party and then the Nationalist Party, joined Het Volk.

The first election under responsible government was set down for February 1907.

That was for the Lower House, the Assembly. The Upper House, the Council, was nominated.

Chapter XXV

SMUTS AND BOTHA

I

It shows the largeness of both Smuts and Botha that Smuts was never envious of Botha. Another man in his skin might have been—until those days in the Great War when Britain began to pay him such tribute as she seems to have offered no other statesman in the world.

But Smuts has never been an envious man. He has never been a resentful, revengeful man. He hates to believe there are people who may wish to injure him. He calls his enemies 'my opponents'. He says, whatever the appearances may be, General Hertzog *likes* him. In the manner of Napoleon, Lincoln and Disraeli, he would sooner promote a useful 'opponent' than a useless supporter. He is even prepared to serve under an opponent.

'What do I care', he feels with Napoleon, 'what a man thinks of me as long as he can do the work?' The work is all that matters to Smuts. His indifference to hostility is only another aspect of his passion for causes rather than persons.

At the same time he has a sense of collective opinion. He even believes in collective prayer. He says it raises the spirit of the world. And, if there are days when he feels popular approbation to be inflated currency—a million marks to the pound—and says 'Woe to you if men speak well of you', there are also days when he says, with an obvious wistfulness: 'The people don't understand me.'

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Could it therefore have been agreeable to him to hear, throughout their association, that Botha was the warm, magnetic personality and he the cold, efficient brain; Botha the wise leader, and he 'slim'—tricky—'Jannie'?

To whom should he explain the emotions behind the haughty eyes? He sank himself in work. While Botha's room was crowded with the men who once had smoked pipes on Kruger's stoep and liked that way of being governed, Smuts sat in his room alone, tirelessly at work. As they came to find in the Great War, so it was from his beginnings: he was prepared without limit to work, not superficially, but from the depths of his creative energy. Even his enemies wondered in the early days what would happen to the Government of the new Union if ever Smuts took it into his mind to have a rest. Nor did they—even his enemies—doubt the sincerity of his friendship with Botha. That friendship, from the time they linked themselves to co-operate with the English until Botha died, never wavered.

None of Botha's portraits suggests the wisdom, humanity and powers of attraction he seems indeed to have possessed. People of all kinds and nationalities, from the Boers at Vereeniging to the statesmen at Versailles, say they have not met his like.

He was eight years older than Smuts—a big, corpulent, dark, proud-looking man, the type of an imposing Maharajah. He was not very healthy. He had strongly arched eyebrows, full eyes, full cheeks and full lips. He wore a small black chin-beard (Smuts and he alone of all South African politicians wore these little beards). Like Smuts (and, for that matter, General Hertzog), he had been born a British subject—he came from Natal—and his wife was descended from those Irish Emmets that produced the patriot Robert. He had not the education of Smuts nor his

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intellectual interests. He was a good bridge player (and, they say, a bad, and afterwards penitent, loser) and he preferred cards and people to lonely thoughts in a study or lonely walks on a mountain. He and Smuts had not, in fact, much in common except their work for South Africa, and in 1919, in Paris, he could not bring himself to share Smuts' transcendent passion over the fate of the world—he remained seeing things in terms of South Africa. . . .

It was Botha who made an enemy to their cause of General Hertzog and his Free State group. But, apart from this mistake or misfortune, he seems seldom, throughout his career, to have done a tactless or unwise thing. Tact, indeed—a tact founded on the warmest consideration and the most essential good sense—was his distinguishing quality. He was able to make people believe what Smuts, with all his brilliance, courtesy, charm, modesty and even tenderness, could not make people believe: that they mattered to him, each one he encountered, to a superlative degree.

Smuts speaks of Kruger as the greatest personality he has ever met (and of Mr. Lloyd George as the most brilliant political genius), and after Kruger he places Botha. When Botha, having prophesied his own end a year before, died in 1919, Smuts felt the world too much for him. The misery of Paris was still weighing him down, he had a sense of things ending everywhere, and it was with difficulty he spoke, as was expected of him, at Botha's graveside. 'His voice', he said, 'will no longer be heard early and late pleading for co-operation. His noble and strong figure will no longer be a living inspiration to a whole people. . . . After an intimate friendship and unbroken co-operation extending over twenty-one years, during which we came as close together as it is ever given men to come, I have the right to call him the largest, most beautiful, sweetest soul of all my land and days. Great in his life, he was happy in his death.

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For his friend was reserved the hard fate to bury him and to remain with the task which even for Botha was too much.'

And now that the two great political parties of South Africa have fused, Smuts tells himself: 'I have done what Botha wished. Our work is done.'

2

Their association dated from those republican days when Botha was a member of the First Volksraad and Smuts State Attorney. They were not closely associated in the Boer War, but they found themselves in accord at the Vereeniging peace, and, peace having come, they saw that, among Boer leaders, they had most in common. It was, Milner told a friend, when he and Kitchener met Botha and Smuts in Pretoria in May of 1902 to discuss the peace settlement, and Smuts spoke of compromise and Botha of co-operation, it was then that, for the first time, he had some hope of working with the Boers. To find these two men standing for the cause of peace was, he told his friend, a providential intervention beyond his dreams and it changed his whole conception of the Boers.

It was not merely the politics, but the belief, of Botha and Smuts that, for South Africa's sake, the white races of South Africa—the more white races the better—had to merge.

3

Smuts is to this day—and more than ever—an advocate of race admixture. He cannot say with Rhodes: 'I have no feelings as to where a man was born', 'race feelings I cannot have in me', for there is no doubt that Smuts has racial predilections. The Boers remain the people of his passion and the English the people who make him happiest. The Old Testament put a liking for Jews into him. The German poets and philosophers put a liking for Germans into him.

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He does not sympathise with the French: he thinks their politics too narrow and nationalistic. He does not believe in the Russians: their accomplishment fails to impress him. These are the reasons he finds in his heart. At the same time, his instincts seem never to have guided him in their direction.

But he can match Rhodes to this extent: 'All I desire', said Rhodes, 'is to know whether a man is a good man and then I want him.' 'My feeling is that the best man must come to the front whatever his race may be.' Smuts wants good qualities from every source to help build up a South African nation. That is, from every European source.

'I would like all the white races in South Africa to mingle', he says. 'Such mingling makes a great people. It made the English a great people. It is making the Americans a great people. It made the Greeks and the Jews great peoples. There was never such nonsense as this idea the Jews have that they are an exclusive, pure race. They are the most impure race on earth. I doubt if they are even Semites. Look at their wanderings: Abyssinia, Babylon, Palestine, Egypt, the Mediterranean, and then every country in the world, and always blood coming into them of strange people. . . .'

He is no less impatient of the Germans' idea of themselves. 'It is stated', he said (not in the nineteen-thirties, but in 1917!), 'that, in the future, the German race must guide the destinies of the world because it is one of the pure races. What arrant nonsense! In South Africa . . . we want to blend our various nationalities and create a new nation—that is, a South African nation. . . .'

'I don't see', he sometimes remarks, 'how the Australians and New Zealanders can ever hope to be a really interesting people. They haven't had any new blood for generations. There's no doubt South Africans are more interesting. Look at our problems. We have all the world's problems in

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one country. Look at the mixture we are. Practically we began by being mixed. I hope we mix more. The Boers are poor merchants, and even the Hollanders are not the merchants they used to be. The English are the best politicians and business men in the world. No one has ever understood the art of government as they do. We need their business and political instincts. The Jews have energy and a capacity for taking chances. We need those.

‘Still the English don’t like us. They don’t like the Jews either. The Boers and the Jews are not easy peoples. They are small, resistant, bitter peoples, and the English find the manners of people like the Arabs more agreeable.’

It was according to these principles (calling for co-operation, taking, as he calls it, the long view) that he spoke in 1904, when he and Botha were forming Het Volk; in 1905, when, repudiating the Lyttelton constitution, he yet asked his hearers ‘to do whatever was in their power to spread conciliation’ (even between the ‘bitter-enders’ and ‘hands-uppers’ of the Boer War); and in 1906 when, responsible government assured, they were preparing for the first election to follow. He has spoken in these terms ever since. Co-operation, fusion, Holism—it always has been and remains the dominant principle of his life.

‘Our association’, he said on behalf of Het Volk in February 1905, before even he had any hope of responsible government, ‘is open to all white men, whether Boer, Jew or Briton, whether wild or tame Boer. . . . We are prepared to extend the hand of brotherhood to all white men in the country. We do not care what their nationality is, or their creed. We want a united South Africa. . . .’ And he repudiated a Nationalist candidate (supporting Het Volk) who advocated restricting Jewish immigration. ‘The Russian Jews who come to this country intend to make it their home; they always have been, and will continue to be, wel-

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comed by our organisation. No measures are ever likely to be taken to restrict their immigration to this country.'

When such measures were, however, taken in 1929, and Smuts' party, no less than General Hertzog's, supported them, Smuts alone among leaders, and practically without followers, opposed the measures. . . .

4

But the welcome Smuts extends to all white races he will not offer to yellow or black. He has never pretended to be otherwise than against the presence of Asiatics in South Africa. As he opposed the Chinese in 1904, so he presently opposed the Indians. As he distrusted the Arabs under Colonel T. E. Lawrence, saying: 'How could he hope to make them a great people? They are no more the Arabs of the past than the Greeks are the descendants of Homer and Pericles. They are an entirely different race'—so he has steadily warned the world against the Japanese. 'I hope', he said, during the Indian troubles in 1908, 'that when the day comes for the issue to be decided between East and West, the East will have no further interests in South Africa and will leave South Africa severely alone.' 'One thing must be clear as the day,' he said in his first election speeches after Union; 'there must be no Asiatic immigration.'

His attitude towards the natives is different. They are in South Africa and they have rights in South Africa. He admits it. 'Africa is the Negro home.' In moods of romantic pessimism he even wonders whether Africa may not be one day the Negro empire. He has an affection for the natives he employs: his manner towards them is patriarchal. He takes sweets to the native children on his farm: 'Môre, kinders'—'Good morning, children,' he says, and pats their scurfy heads.

But under everything—despite his birth in the Cape

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Colony (which is negrophilist by profession if not by feeling); despite his strong consciousness of liberal thought; despite his sincere wish to be just to them; despite even his indignation when, during his absence in England, his colleagues agreed to a colour bar in the United Party constitution, and his voting in a minority in 1935 for the retention of the native franchise in the Cape, and his actual proclamation during an election of equal rights—still under everything, one feels, his impulse towards the natives resembles that of his fellow Boers.

Power must remain with the white races. The white races must remain white. Is not every principle limited by exception, instinct or reason? Smuts' ideal of fusion stops before the danger of lowering civilisation.

5

When Smuts made his first public speech—the one in Kimberley before the Raid in support of Rhodes—Rhodes had not yet come to his 'equal rights' idea (or, as some say, his need for it), and Smuts followed Rhodes in demanding class legislation against the native. The native, he said, deteriorated in contact with the white; he was against the negrophilist principle that the native should be allowed to work out his own destiny; native education, he said, should be physical and manual rather than intellectual. 'Is it safe, is it advisable,' he asked, 'that huge masses of vice and indolence and ignorance should continue to exist, to flourish, aye, to increase at an unheard of rate at our very doors, in the midst of a high civilisation? Let us defy the sentimental cranks and well-meaning mischief-makers.' The world, he said, should not be hindered in the 'development of a grand racial aristocracy'.

He was young in 1895 and greatly under the influence of Rhodes. Yet what he said then he stands by to-day, and,

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since the native policy of Rhodes before the Raid was the policy of the Dutch, Smuts had no reason, on Rhodes' fall, to revise his attitude towards the natives. It remained fundamentally the Dutch attitude (and, indeed, the general attitude of the white South African). 'We look upon the intermixture of black and white in South Africa', he wrote eight months after the Raid, 'as in every way the darkest spot of our civilisation. . . . Let it come to be considered the grossest violation of that social etiquette which is even more powerful than the law of self-respect, for a white man to cohabit with a coloured woman. . . . The negrophilist ideal, which we prefer to call the missionary ideal' (and which led logically, he said, to missionaries marrying native women)—'that is dead.' In enunciating his policy during the first Union election he said: 'I personally am not against the native—I am against the policy of oppression. I would help the native in every legitimate way in accordance with his present requirements. But I cannot forget that civilisation has been built up in this country by the white race, that we are the guardians of liberty, justice and all the elements of progress in South Africa. The franchise is the last argument, more powerful than the sword or rifle; and the day we give away this final protection we possess we shall have to consider very carefully what we are doing. We have received a heritage of civilisation from our fathers, which I hope we shall hand on intact and unspoiled to our children. If these children find an opening to extend the rule of liberty and political rights they may do so. To my mind it would be one of the most dangerous things for the white race, constituted as it is in South Africa, to take such steps to-day.' And although, during the Great War, he spoke in England of the 'bedrock of the Christian code' as the basis for the treatment of the native, he was yet compelled to add these words: 'It is useless to run black and white at the same mo-

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ment, and to subject them to the same machinery of legislation. White and black are different, not only in colour, but also in mind; they are different in political status and their political institutions should be different. . . . Instead of mixing up black and white all over the country, we are trying to keep them as far apart as possible. . . .'

On this a native publicist burst out: 'My father and grandfather helped to tame the Free State. I am of this Province. Are we going to allow a Dutchman from Malmesbury in the Cape to dictate to us where we are to live and how we shall exist?'

But even in 1929, at Oxford, when Smuts was in residence there as Rhodes Memorial Lecturer, he was still speaking according to his old belief. As Smuts has not changed in any other fundamental respect, so he has not changed in his attitude to the natives, and so, it is safe to prophesy, he never will. . . .

On co-operation then between all Europeans; on exclusion of all Asiatics; on the conviction that 'if there is one point that unites the white people of South Africa, it is the lines on which the native population should be dealt with . . . it would make a very bad impression, not only on the minds of the natives themselves, if, in any difficulties that may turn up in South Africa, the British Government were to take the side of the native against the white population generally'—on a platform, one might say, of race principles, white, yellow and black, Smuts and Botha fought the election of February 1907 and won it. Out of sixty-nine seats, thirty-seven went to Het Volk, six to the affiliated Nationalists (calling themselves lately the Responsibles), twenty-one to the Progressives (the dihard Uitlanders), and to Labour and Independents five. Het Volk took office. One of the Johannesburg papers began to call Botha and Smuts 'General'. There was talk of making Smuts Prime Minister.

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He had no intellectual equal in the country, he had already been a minister under Kruger, his words to Campbell-Bannerman had clinched the matter of responsible government in England. He stood down for Botha. 'I considered it would be a mistake', he wrote to Merriman, 'to take precedence over Botha, who is really one of the finest men South Africa has ever produced.' He accepted the offices of Colonial Secretary and Minister of Education.

Next month Botha went to a conference of Colonial Premiers in London (there to be accorded that irresistible welcome and masterly hospitality which turns England's distinguished foes into distinguished friends) and then Smuts acted in his place too.

Botha was back from England when A. W. Lloyd (now of *Punch*) illustrated a Het Volk Cabinet meeting. The meeting consisted of six ministers, all with the face of Smuts. The description under the cartoon read: 'The controlling influence of General Smuts in the Cabinet is so apparent that the Government may be said to be concentrated in him alone.'

It had, indeed, taken the whole country no more than a few months to realise that a Government which contained Smuts was not only dominated by Smuts—it *was* Smuts. Everyone spoke of it.

He exhausted himself doing all the work, and he was happy. The raging energy whose only outlet had been his letters to Miss Hobhouse—a great wind whistling thinly through a chink—now drove everything before it. If he was—if he is—a Liberal by conviction, he was and remains a dictator by disposition. All very well for Smuts to say he likes the simple folk, the real human beings, that he rests on the common sense of the common man. His faint reliance, in intercourse or practice, on the common man, the things he believes the common man believes, do not support him.

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In 1907 he could, still less than to-day, bear the slow fumbling of other men. He was more impatient even than in later years, when he was still capable of tearing a shirt in two whose stiff front would not admit a stud, and of hurling out of a window smoking lamps, a disturbing gramophone or sewing machine. That, when the time came, he brought himself to sit patiently in opposition—to sit silent year after year under the taunts and lashes of his opponents—was a miracle of soul force even Gandhi could not have excelled. . . .

This first session he did everything. He knew what he wanted. He had no doubts what should be done, and by whom. He had no hesitation in doing it. He got the mine-owners to admit they had been wrong about the Chinese. 'We made a mistake', said one of them. 'Everyone makes mistakes. Chinese labour is finished. We accept the position.'

He pleased them less by offering to buy for the King, as a token of the new Boer loyalty, the Cullinan diamond, the largest diamond in the world, found that year in the partly state-owned Premier Mine. They said the Cullinan diamond was worth hundreds of thousands, and that the country needed the money, and there were other ways of showing loyalty 'to flag, Empire and throne than by gifts of glittering baubles'. It amused Smuts to point to the mining representatives in Parliament: 'When I see the Knight Commanders and D.S.O.'s rise and unblushingly oppose the motion, it shows me that although there may be great financial power among them there is little political insight.'

It amused him no less to have at other sorts of people. Those were not yet the days when politicians in South Africa—as in America—had at all costs to placate the farmers for their votes, and to the farmers who came with complaints Smuts told the story of the old man who had

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discovered a really serious drawback about farming in the Transvaal. 'The ground is too low. You have to bend your back to work.' When they pointed out that de la Rey, during the war, had 'guaranteed those under him a living', he replied: 'Nonsense, what he guaranteed you was certain death.' When they asked him if he knew what was needed in farming and would he help them get it, he said: 'Yes, sweat.' He would have, he said, no pauperisation of the farmers.

In his first session in Parliament Smuts did a hundred things, but three of prophetic significance.

He put education under government control—with English compulsory and Dutch optional and Bible reading—undogmatically explained—for half-an-hour before school. Catholics, Jews and Anglicans might stay away from the Bible reading. Those ultra-Calvinistic Dutch who ran private schools could not have government aid. At least, that was the law. In effect, they got it.

This measure had results that were greater politically than educationally. For in the Orange River Colony General Hertzog resented this making of English compulsory and Dutch optional; he said it put Boers in an inferior position to the English, and it showed, he said, the way Botha and Smuts were sacrificing their own people to their recent enemies. For his part, he made both languages absolutely equal in the Orange River Colony, compelled English teachers to pass examinations in Dutch, dismissed English inspectors, and, shortly after Union, found himself in the law courts about it and became suddenly the acknowledged champion of every Anglophobe Boer in the country, as against the too conciliatory Botha and Smuts. . . .

Another significant work of Smuts was to make a stand against Labour. He offered white labourers relief employment at two shillings a day with their keep, or three shil-

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lings and sixpence without their keep, and tried to persuade them that if he gave more all the unemployed in South Africa would come to the Rand and displace them. The unemployed demanded five shillings a day and not relief work but 'work of a proper character', and three hundred of them marched from Johannesburg to Pretoria, where a circus proprietor entertained them at his circus, and afterwards they slept on the racecourse. . . . It was the beginning of winter.

On his thirty-seventh birthday Smuts called out two English regiments to patrol the Reef, where the miners were striking. There were miners who pointed out that five years earlier they had fought under Smuts against those same regiments, and that Smuts had sought their support against the mining house party.

Here began Smuts' difference with Labour that was to continue throughout his long years of office and finally drive him out of it.

His third significant work was connected with the Indians.

Chapter XXVI

SMUTS AND GANDHI

I

The Indian troubles in South Africa had their origin in the same system that had brought the Chinese to South Africa: indentured labour.

In 1860 Indians had come to Natal, as earlier to the West Indies, to work on the sugar estates. They replaced the Kaffirs, who (the sugar planters said) were less reliable and competent, and always wanted to go home to their kraals. They would just, the planters said, try them for the period of their indentures.

At the end of their indentures, however, it was found cheaper to give the Indians land than to pay for their return passages to India, and it was also pleasant to have close at hand such a good labour deposit. Thirty years later, in an attempt to reverse that policy, an annual tax of three pounds was imposed on all Indians who preferred settlement to repatriation.

The Indians settled on the land, made a garden colony of Natal and propagated their species. By the time Smuts came to live in Johannesburg there were more Indians than Europeans in Natal, a new Government party in Natal was pointing out that 'unless an arrestation is put upon the introduction of immigrants from India the whole social polity will be submerged', and next year licensing and im-

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migration acts were passed that bitterly hurt and hindered them.

To their rescue came Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

2

It was not the hairless, toothless, emaciated, loin-clothed Mahatma the world knows to-day, nor had he come to South Africa as a crusader. The Gandhi who landed at Durban in the early eighteen-nineties came as a barrister to fight a case, as a British Indian gentleman of caste and culture who owned an evening suit, a frock coat and a top hat, refused to wear a ready-made tie; and had trained himself in the ways of a typical Englishman by studying in London dancing, elocution, French and fiddling. 'The one book', he came to find in later years, 'that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life was Ruskin's *Unto This Last*.'

He had not understood what it meant to be a British Indian gentleman in South Africa. Nor were South Africans accustomed to Indian gentlemen. They knew only the coolie kind of Indians. They spoke of Indians as coolies—all Indians. Even to-day there are people in South Africa who, whether in ignorance or malice, use the term coolie when they mean Indian.

On his second day in Durban Gandhi went to see the law courts, wearing his turban of an Indian barrister. The magistrate told him to remove his turban or leave the court. He left the court. He thought then of exchanging his turban for an English hat, but a friend suggested that in a hat he might be taken for a waiter, so he continued to wear the turban.

On his way to Pretoria to fight his case, he took, as is incumbent on a barrister, a first-class railway ticket. But a fellow passenger objected to travelling with an Indian, and

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he was asked to sit in the van. He refused to go. A policeman was accordingly sent for, who pitched him out with his luggage, the train left without him, and he spent the night in the dark and cold waiting-room wondering whether he ought not immediately to return to India.

Travelling through the Transvaal by coach, he was advised by the conductor, in order to avoid unpleasantness with the other passengers, to change seats with him. But then the conductor wanted his own seat back—he wanted to smoke—and he told Gandhi to sit on the footboard. 'Sammy, you sit on this,' he said, spreading a piece of sack-
ing for him, and calling him by the term South Africans have derived from 'sami', the frequent ending of Indian names. When Gandhi protested, he struck him in the face.

In Johannesburg he was refused admission to an hotel. Since he was determined, for his profession's sake, to travel to Pretoria first-class, he called on the station-master wearing his frock coat and top hat and, as he adds, a necktie—that the station-master might see for himself he was worthy of a first-class ticket. In Pretoria, falling under the ban of all coloured peoples, he was arrested for being out after nine o'clock without a pass. . . .

Revelations came in many forms. . . . It was vouchsafed to Gandhi that he had a mission.

3

Before ever Gandhi had arrived in South Africa there was trouble in the Transvaal on account of the Indians, but not in the Orange River Colony, because the Orange River Colony had never admitted them.

Kruger admitted them—had to admit them under the London Convention. They came in with restrictions, having to pay a registration fee of three pounds, being forbidden to own land, compelled to live in locations, and having gener-

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ally no better rights than other coloured people. Yet come they did, and by the time of the Boer War there were fifteen thousand of them.

Gandhi thought that justice was on the side of the Boers. 'But every single subject of a state must not hope to enforce his private opinion.' The Indians demanded the rights of British subjects. Was not the Boers' ill-treatment of the Indians one of the reasons given for the making of the war? And what would be the portion of Indians after the war if they did nothing to help? He offered the Natal Government the services of the Indians.

His offer was at first refused: 'You Indians know nothing of the war. You couldn't help us. We should simply have to be looking after you all the time.' 'But ordinary servants' work in hospitals? Would that demand great intelligence?' 'It would demand training. . . .'

Afterwards, however, the offer was accepted. Indians were allowed to help. They entered the Transvaal with the British forces. And when the war was over they erected on one of the Johannesburg hills a monument whose inscription (in English, Urdu and Hindi) reads:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF BRITISH OFFICERS
WARRANT OFFICERS, NATIVE N.C.O.'S AND
MEN, VETERINARY ASSISTANTS, NALBANDS
AND FOLLOWERS OF THE INDIAN ARMY WHO
DIED IN SOUTH AFRICA. 1899-1902

On the other three sides of the monument were the words:

MUSSULMAN. CHRISTIAN-ZOROASTRIAN. HINDU-SIKH.

And, blood from different veins having now flowed down a common channel, the Transvaal having now become a British colony, Gandhi came to Pretoria to see what the war had done for the Indians of the Transvaal. . . .

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The Transvaal was full of post-war troubles, problems, enmities and needs. The Boers were destitute, the country ravaged, crops sick, cattle sick, the mine-owners in despair. Reparation was England's promise, reconstruction Milner's pride. He knew the anxiety of the Imperial Government concerning India. He had to justify the war, he had to prove his honour. Had he not pulled down the old Transvaal to make a better Transvaal and a greater South Africa? The clamouring mines had persuaded him that a better Transvaal needed Chinese labour. Who—looking at Natal—could persuade him that a better Transvaal needed Indian immigration? Hardly this decorous little Indian, with his neat moustache and high stiff collar and striped tie. What more could anybody see in Gandhi in 1903? And did ever a national champion choose a less opportune moment to demand a manifestation of gratitude?

'I hold', said Milner, 'that when a coloured man possesses a certain high grade of civilisation he ought to obtain what I might call white privileges, irrespective of his colour. For the present, however, there is no prospect whatever of their prevailing—certainly as far as Asiatics are concerned. . . . The Asiatics are strangers forcing themselves upon a community reluctant to receive them.'

He understated the position. The Transvaalers were not reluctant—they were wild—against receiving Indians. They asked how the English in England would like the idea of being swamped by the overflow of a polygamous people, hundreds of millions strong, coming, not in the shape of princes and philosophers, but as coolies, waiters, hawkers and small tradesmen—to undercharge, undersell and underlive the Europeans.

Most of the pre-war Indians had left the country; but there were now the military servants and camp followers, and new Indians came continually despite Milner's Peace

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Preservation Proclamation, which forbade all entry without government permit.

Milner's reply to Gandhi was to suggest that pre-war Indians should re-register to establish their right to live in the Transvaal under the old conditions. Gandhi himself was the first to re-register. The Indians who now registered gave their right thumb-prints as a means of identification.

But yet Indians kept coming. They came saying they were pre-war residents, they came in the name of registered Indians. There were Indians whom no one had seen before the war settled unidentifiably, under forged permits, in every part of the Transvaal. The thumb-prints were found to be an insufficient identification.

So now a new ordinance was drafted demanding registration for every pre-war male Asiatic over sixteen, and the finger-prints of all ten fingers had to be given.

The South African Indians protested to the Imperial Government. The Indians in India protested. John Morley, the Secretary of State for India, said Indians had a right in every part of the British Empire.

The ordinance was disallowed. But responsible government was due, and everyone knew, and they knew in England, that responsible government would revive the measures now rejected. . . .

Gandhi had come to South Africa not to stay but for a professional purpose. He had remained, while one need after another presented itself to him, thinking always that next year or the year after he would return to India. Now he decided to stay in the Transvaal. He became a solicitor to earn his living and, working for the Indians, he began to perfect himself in that spiritual exercise he called *Satyagraha*—soul force. His chief teacher was his chief opponent—another believer in soul force: Smuts.

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4

There are certain men for whom Smuts has a great personal regard—men like Kruger and Botha. But there are others of whom he has a spiritual awe. One of them is Woodrow Wilson and another is Mahatma Gandhi. 'The men I venerate', he says, 'are not those who can arouse a nation's enthusiasm, but those who can do what they think right in the teeth of a nation's opposition. Such a man was Wilson, standing alone, dying, against the American people for what he knew to be the salvation of the world. Another is Gandhi.

'But all Indians are not Gandhis. If Gandhi was right to consider his people, I had to consider mine. I believed in making South Africa a white man's country. I opposed Gandhi.'

At the first sitting of the new Parliament the rejected ordinance concerning Asiatic registration was revived, it was passed unanimously, and almost without debate, by both Houses, and the Imperial Government ratified it.

An Immigration Act was also passed.

5

When the deputation of Indians went to London to complain to the British Parliament about the registering of their finger-prints, the Speaker himself investigated the matter and found that finger-prints were used in India. Ex-officials and ex-soldiers, for instance, could not get their pensions before registering their finger-prints. When, however, Smuts mentioned this in the Transvaal Parliament, pointing out that they had given their finger-prints in Milner's time, various Indians replied that no more than one finger-print was ever used in India, and that they had only given Milner their right thumb. They said right thumb-prints

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were taken of Mussulmans going to Mecca, because often Mecca pilgrims returned from their holy shrine with plague. They said left thumb-prints were taken of habitual criminals. They said it was against their religion to give all their finger-prints. They offered to give their right thumb-prints.

Smuts said thumb-prints alone had been found, in practice, insufficient. He demanded ten finger-prints. One hundred thousand Indians in Natal, he said, had given their ten finger-prints without demur, and so had the sixty thousand indentured Chinese. Finger-prints, he said, were the only safeguard against the forged, fraudulent certificates that could be bought by an Indian in Durban, Johannesburg or Bombay. Without finger-prints the certificates meant simply nothing at all.

The Act gave the Indians until November 30th to register.

The Indians refused to register. They picketed the registration offices to prevent backsliding attempts to register. Gandhi came to plead with Smuts, and Smuts replied through his secretary that he would 'carry out in full the provisions of the Asiatic Law Amendment Act, and if the resistance of the Indians residing in this country led to results which they did not seriously face at present they would have only themselves and their leaders to blame'.

Out of the ten thousand Indians liable to registration, five hundred registered, mostly men, said the Indian Association, who had no right to be in the Transvaal. The others faced the rigours of the Act: deprivation of their trading licences, imprisonment, deportation. That was the work of Gandhi. Gandhi had begun his long war against Smuts. On November 30th their opportunity to register departed.

What was Smuts to do. Ten thousand Indians were liable to imprisonment or deportation. Was he to put ten thou-

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sand Indians over the border? Who would receive them? Was he to send them to gaols? Where was he to find the gaols for them? He extended the registration period by a month. The end of December arrived. Still the Indians had not registered and would not register. They preferred to go to gaol. They went to gaol. Gandhi went with them.

6

The gaols of the Transvaal are not built for Indian passive resisters. They are built for European and native criminals. The Indians had to go to the native quarters of the gaols. The cells were verminous. In one small yard in a Johannesburg gaol a hundred and fifty Indians occupied the space meant for forty-five.

The food natives get in gaol is mealie-meal mixed with animal fat. The Indians' religion forbade animal fat. In Johannesburg butter was given instead of fat and rice instead of mealie-meal. But in Pretoria the system of pap and fat was firmly maintained, until pap alone was given.

It was January, which ought to be a beautiful month in Johannesburg, with wild thunderstorms and quick, healing sun and the air fresh and lively. But it can be hot in January. It was hot that January. Sometimes Indians fainted. The prison officials (who also were not designed for Indian passive resisters) made protests against the Indians, and the Indians made protests against the officials. There were protests in England. Smuts held constant Cabinet meetings.

From prison Gandhi suggested that if he could see Smuts he might be able to remove some misunderstandings. Smuts said he 'was not conscious of any misunderstandings', and he had nothing further to say. 'No useful purpose would therefore be served at this stage by the proposed interview.'

But then he changed his mind. He agreed to negotiate. He had a meeting with Gandhi, and they came to an arrange-

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ment that if the Indians, who had lost their opportunity of registering legally owing to the expiration of the time limit—if the Indians in a body now came forward and registered *voluntarily*, Smuts would 'lay the whole matter before Parliament', and they would be given three months to register, and during these three months no one would be prosecuted under the Act, and the leaders would be allowed to sign instead of giving their finger-prints, and they, for their part—the leaders—would induce their compatriots to register and even assist the Government against offenders.

Letters passed between Smuts and Gandhi (with two others), setting forth the terms of the agreement: 'We recognise', said Gandhi, 'that it is not possible during the Parliamentary recess to repeal the Act, and we have noted your repeated public declarations that there is no likelihood of the Act being repealed.'

What did he mean by this? That the Indians expected the Act to be repealed after the Parliamentary recess, but yet understood from Smuts' public declarations that it could not be repealed? That if the Indians gave him the mere symbol of their voluntary registration, he would succumb to their spiritual blackmail, condone their resistance of his law, yield their demands, forgo further measures, show all the world how to beat him in future—that, seriously, he would climb down? Could anyone believe it of Smuts? There were those who, when he proceeded to release the Indians, did believe it. He himself (a red light of danger) admitted it. "The position I take up in all my public life is that the man who cannot climb down is a small and contemptible man. . . . And if one has made a mistake the sooner one climbs down the better. I do not mind climbing down. I am accused of being too prone to climbing down. . . . I secure my object at the same time. The Indians said they would never submit to finger-print registration.

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They have submitted. I have told them that the law will not be repealed so long as there is an Asiatic in the country who has not registered. . . . Until every Indian in the country has registered the law will not be repealed.'

In the House of Commons Asquith explained that 'the just cause of grievance on the part of the Indians has been removed without sacrificing the policy on which the white population in the Transvaal is united'.

In his *Recollections* Morley noted that after a long talk with Botha in London Botha assured him he 'would do his very best to mitigate the sharpness of the anti-Asiatic ordinance, and in truth that is an unwritten condition of a certain favour that the Government have agreed to do for him in a financial direction'.

The 'certain favour' was a loan of five million pounds. People in the Transvaal said that Smuts had climbed down to the Indians for this five million pounds.

7

So now the Indians registered. They registered, in terms of the Gandhi-Smuts compromise, voluntarily. Even the overflowing leaders gave their finger-prints. They waited to see what Smuts would do.

They might have expected that, whatever he did do, he would not be altogether defeated by Gandhi's soul force, nor yield his anti-Asiatic principles.

He drafted in one measure an amendment of the Immigration Act and a repeal of the Asiatic Act. Henceforth no Asiatics at all, whatever their attainments or standing, were to enter the Transvaal. The certificates of those who had voluntarily registered were validated. He held that this proposed measure ratified his promise to the Indians.

Gandhi held it did not. He held that the repeal of the Act, linked as it was with complete and specific refusal of all



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PRETORIA, APRIL 1907

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further Asiatic immigration, was worse than the Act itself—a more terrible humiliation even than finger-print registration. No Indians at all—no Indians however good or great! He asked Smuts if he would not let even six Indians a year enter—Indians of the most cultured class, submitting to the most stringent tests—that there might only not stand against them this ugliness of a total prohibition. ‘Do not dishonour us’, he pleaded (and Smuts himself—a softer Smuts—came to repeat these words on the Indians’ behalf seventeen years later): ‘Do not dishonour us. We recognise that there must be distinctions, but do not cast a stigma upon us in the laws of your country.’

The iron Smuts of 1908 refused. He offered Gandhi the draft bill or nothing.

Gandhi said he preferred nothing. Indians burned their certificates. Smuts withdrew the draft bill and substituted a new one that had no relation to the terms of their compromise. Still another Act was passed which put them in a worse position than they had been under Kruger—henceforth they could not live in any proclaimed gold-mining area.

An Act was also, however, passed which Smuts said was a fulfilment of his promise to the Indians to validate the voluntary registration.

8

Gandhi said it was not a fulfilment of his promise to the Indians. He said it was not the repeal of the Asiatic Registration Act.

Smuts said he had not promised to repeal, without qualification at all, the Asiatic Registration Act. He referred Gandhi to various of his public speeches. Gandhi countered with the climb-down speech. Smuts pointed out the words of Gandhi’s own letter to him: ‘We recognise that it is not

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possible during the Parliamentary recess to repeal the Act, and we have noted your repeated public declarations that there is no likelihood of the Act being repealed.' Gandhi said it was not on Smuts' formal promises alone he rested. He had a personal promise from Smuts.

Smuts denied a personal promise. There had been no more between them, he said, than a general discussion.

The facetious rumour went about that Gandhi and Smuts had been talking philosophy and so had become hazy about everything else. Gandhi and Smuts, however, never got to the philosophy stage until they met in London many years later.

The immediate question was settled when, in July 1908, an Indian called Aswat brought a case before the Transvaal Supreme Court. Aswat declared he had sent in his pre-war permits in order to get a form for voluntary registration. The conditions under which he had applied for this form—namely, the repeal of the Act—had not been fulfilled by the other side. He therefore demanded both his permits and his application.

The Court held it was extremely unlikely the Colonial Secretary (Smuts) would have agreed to repeal the Act. It said the words of Gandhi's own letter were evidence that the Indians had not expected the Act to be repealed. As to the verbal promise, the Registrar of Asiatics, who had been present at the interview, supported the Colonial Secretary.

The Court decided that the Colonial Secretary had undertaken 'to accept registration in a form similar to that prescribed by the Act, and then to lay the matter before the Parliament at its next session', but not to repeal the Act. It decided that the voluntary registration form was in the position of a letter which became the property of the person to whom it was written, and could not therefore be reclaimed, but that the permits had to be returned because

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they had been sent in merely for temporary purposes of registration. It awarded costs against the applicant.

The law, in short, supported Smuts and not Gandhi.

So passive resistance was resumed. Indians came into the Transvaal, were deported and came again; were imprisoned, released, deported and came again. Gandhi practised his vows of chastity—*Brahmacharya*.

The years passed. Union came. Old laws were repealed. New laws replaced them that still forbade the Indians to enter South Africa or move from province to province. There was just one concession made which greatly pleased the British Government: the word Asiatics was not used. A new Act excluded 'any person or class of person deemed by the Minister (of the Interior) on economic grounds or on account of standards or habits of life to be unsuited to the requirements of the Union or any particular province thereof'. And Smuts forthwith issued an order (which was years later tested in the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court and upheld) 'deeming' all Asiatics unsuited, on the grounds mentioned, to the requirements of the Union. Gandhi subdued his passions further by giving up salt and peas, but acquiesced in the new Act, since it did not formally in terms differentiate against Asiatics, and had the approval of the British Government.

Yet even now the end was not come. Now, on threats of a new passive resistance movement, Gandhi demanded the repeal of the three pounds tax imposed on the Indians permanently settled in Natal, on the ground that it constituted a racial differentiation against Indians. Smuts refused to be coerced, and so, for the last time, the Indians defied the law and offered their bodies for punishment. Two thousand of them, led by Gandhi, crossed from Natal into the Transvaal and invited arrest.

They were arrested. Gandhi himself was sent to the

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Bloemfontein gaol. ('The prospect of uninterrupted study for a year filled me with joy.') Other Indians were sent to other gaols. Those who could not be accommodated in gaols were sent to work in the mines. The Indians in India made trouble for the English. The Viceroy intervened. 'General Smuts', says Gandhi, 'was in the predicament of a snake that has made a mouthful of a rat which it can neither gulp nor cast out.' Gandhi's holiday in gaol was abruptly ended. A Commission of Enquiry was arranged, and Gandhi went to Smuts to express his dissatisfaction with some of its members. 'I saw that General Smuts did not ride the same high horse as before, when the great march began. At that time the General would not so much as talk to me. . . . But now he was ready to confer.'

He gave Gandhi his victory. What was Gandhi's victory? For what had he striven through five years? For a few things, such as voluntary registration, the remission of the three pounds tax in Natal, and the legitimisation of polygamous wives, which were now granted in an Indian Relief Act, but chiefly for the deletion from the laws of the word Asiatic. Not the spirit. Not the fact. Merely the word.

So now there was a triumphal farewell banquet at which Gandhi and his wife, small and slight as children, with garlands over their shoulders, drank each a cup of water, and two days after the Great War began Gandhi landed in England, and from England he went to India, there to practise what he had learnt in Africa. . . .

And there came a time during the war when Smuts said of the Indians who had served under him: 'I wish here publicly . . . to repeat that I have had no more loyal, devoted and brave troops under me than those troops from the Indian Empire, and I think the young South Africans who went with me, who fought side by side with those heroes from Asia, to-day have more kindly feelings than

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they had before towards the Indian population of South Africa. . . .’

But yet, in the end, he could not go back on his fundamental principles about Asiatics: ‘We found a formula,’ he told the Imperial War Cabinet in 1921, ‘a general form of words which did not mention Indians or Asiatics in particular, but which had the effect of placing it in our power to stop further immigration on any appreciable scale.

‘Whatever may be the position in the British Empire as a whole, in South Africa we are not based on a system of political equality. The whole basis of our particular system in South Africa rests on inequality and on recognising fundamental differences which exist in the structure of our population. We started as a small white colony in a black continent. In the Union the vast majority of our citizens are black, probably the majority of them are in a semi-barbarous state still, and we have never in our laws recognised any system of equality. . . . It is the bedrock of our constitution. . . . That is the fundamental position from which we start. That is the colour question.

‘The Indian question with us is an entirely subordinate question. . . . But you cannot deal with the Indians apart from the whole position in South Africa; you cannot give political rights to the Indians which you deny to the rest of the coloured citizens in South Africa. If you touch the Indian position you must go the whole length. . . .’

Some of the other delegates were shocked by this, but Mr. Winston Churchill said it would be affectation and humbug to pretend there would be no great changes in the laws of the land if hundreds of thousands of Indians—or perhaps millions—were to enter England and seriously compete with her working and clerical classes. He understood South Africa’s position.

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9

So Smuts, it seems, defeated Gandhi in South Africa. To what end? . . .

There is that happening in our world which has not happened before in history. The great players have taught the little players their game and now everyone knows. The secret is gone, power is gone, aristocracy is gone, both among men and nations, and gone for ever. Can it be otherwise than that Europeans have a few more years in India and so many times a few more years in Africa? Till the eyes close, however, and nerves and thoughts lie still, men cling to what they have—dream and desire, power and possession—not more willing to abandon such increase of themselves than of the very eyes and nerves and thoughts of their naked birth. Till the Indians or Africans dispossess them, the Europeans will hold what they have, and what they were they will leave behind them. On that system men live and on that system nations, which are men too, act.

Chapter XXVII

A UNION OF BROTHERS

I

It had been understood, when Smuts came from England with responsible government, that now the way was clear for that to happen of which many had dreamt—a union of South African states. Half a century before, Grey, the Cape Governor, had thought of it, and, after him, Carnarvon, the Colonial Secretary—sending Anthony Froude to South Africa to spy out hopes. Two Transvaal Presidents had thought of it—each in his own way—Burgers and Kruger. Hofmeyr had thought of it. Within the last ten years Rhodes had wanted to make it with gold ('If only one had a Johannesburg! . . . Then you would have a great commonwealth. Then you would have a union of states'), and Milner with war. Smuts, inheriting Rhodes' idea ('Rhodes was a seminal mind. His thoughts bore fruit'), inheriting also Milner's painful achievement, crystallised union with words.

2

Responsible government, the first result of his words, had been promised but not yet granted the Transvaal and Orange River Colony, when there appeared in a Cape Town Dutch newspaper called *Ons Land* a series of articles, saying the time was now come for union. In the month that saw the proclamation of responsible government for

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the Transvaal—in December 1906—Lord Selborne, the High Commissioner, was asked by Dr. Jameson, the Prime Minister of the Cape, to review the scheme proposed by *Ons Land*, and he advocated it in a reasoned dispatch. In June 1907 the matter was before the Parliaments of the four states concerned, and they all carried resolutions in favour of national union. Presently closer union societies were formed in every important town in every colony. In May 1908 an intercolonial conference met in Pretoria, nominally to discuss fiscal arrangements, but actually to voice a declaration that 'the best interests and the permanent prosperity of South Africa can only be secured by an early Union, under the Crown of Great Britain, of the several self-governing Colonies'. Their resolution was endorsed by their four Parliaments. A convention sat in Durban and Cape Town, and on February 9th, 1909, the draft constitution of a united South Africa was published simultaneously throughout South Africa. A few months later, at Bloemfontein, amendments were considered, alterations signed, and the convention dissolved. Nineteen South African statesmen carried the amended draft Act to England, where it was recast in the shape of an Imperial Bill, and submitted to Parliament and the Royal Assent. What it had taken the homogeneous states of Australia—from first conference to final achievement—over a decade to do, was done by the warring states of South Africa in exactly two years. On May 31st, 1910, the Union of South Africa came into formal existence.

3

'You have probably heard it stated', said Smuts, when the draft constitution was published, 'that a small number of men, having their own ends to serve, rushed this matter forward in the face of public apathy and public opposition.

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... The constitution is not a man's work. It bears the impress of a Higher Hand. ...'

It is difficult, however, to avoid the conclusion that Smuts was the Higher Hand's instrument.

Wherever one looks at the work that preceded union, there one sees Smuts. He laid the foundation with responsible government. He propagated the idea by letter, talk, print and public speech. He made the detailed plan. His energy and enterprise carried it through.

It was perhaps not strange that he was impatient with his Indians. While they were passively resisting, to everyone's active discomfort, he was preparing—what was he preparing?—nothing less than a plan for South African union. Before him he had the world's previous unions—its federations, incorporations, amalgamations. England and Ireland, Belgium and Holland, Norway and Sweden had been failures. England and Scotland, the States of America and Germany had been successes. If Australia was a success, it was not because of the expensive, awkward divergencies of its seven federated governments.

He studied in particular the American Constitution. Walt Whitman had made it intimate to him, and he had always thought Alexander Hamilton a greater man than Washington. He decided, however, that the American Constitution was too rigid, gave the federal states too much power and the central authority too little. 'We have no right to attempt to hamper and bind ourselves down by any cast-iron system of constitution which only a revolution can amend.' He envied England indeed, that had no written constitution at all, no document limiting the power of Parliament. More than ever to-day he sees in this fundamental freedom England's essential strength.

South Africa could not be like that. Its union had to be formally made. Yet its constitution, he decided, should be

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as flexible as was possible. And it should be more than a union: a unity. And quite absolute. The four provincial systems should be completely subsidiary to it.

As soon as his plans were ready he wrote to Merriman, who had replaced Jameson as Prime Minister of the Cape, that the time was now come for union. Jameson had said, concerning his defeat, 'Federation must wait.' Smuts believed that it precisely could not wait. The Liberals were losing ground in England. The Afrikaners were making ground in South Africa. Would greater Englishers be as ready as their opponents to trust South Africa to the enemies of six years ago? From Europe, Steyn, the ex-President of the Orange Free State, had returned saying that a war was coming between England and Germany, and what would happen then?

Merriman felt with Smuts that union was urgent. 'Let us immediately agree upon principles', he said. 'Let us immediately agree upon procedure', retorted Smuts. Was it their mission, he asked, to solve in this urgency matters of principle? 'Give us a national Parliament, a national executive, and trust to them for a solution of those questions that have troubled us in the past.'

He spoke these words at their first conference at Pretoria in May 1908. To that conference he brought six resolutions, all relating to the procedure of getting immediate union. The Parliaments of the four states had hardly endorsed the first resolution—that the best interests and permanent prosperity of South Africa were attainable only through early union—when there he was with his detailed scheme of union. (So, in 1918, pushing past the vagueness of other men, he came to have ready for presentation to Woodrow Wilson his detailed scheme for a League of Nations.)

He wrote to de Villiers, Chief Justice of the Cape, concerning his union scheme: 'The paper represents merely my

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personal opinions. If the main ideas are approved, I propose to prepare a draft constitution which might largely expedite the work of the convention: and time is of enormous importance in this matter.'

To the convention itself he brought along a staff of nineteen advisers and secretaries—a larger staff than the staffs of all the other colonies together. He had his brief prepared to the last detail, he had it prepared to the extent of being able and ready to modify the last detail; he had his facts, precedents and arguments; he met objectors with compromises and doubts with that fertile optimism which to this day hypnotises people into helpless acceptance.

Here were thirty-three men gathered together, 'men', as Curzon said (he was in Cape Town at the time), 'whose names a few years ago were anathema to each other; men who not only would have put each other to death, but were within an ace of doing so; men who had never before been in the same room.' Now they were 'associated not only in amicable conclave at the council board but at the dinner table. . . . And there was not one of them who, while loyal to his colony or his race or his following, was not more loyal to the wider cause of South African union within the sheltering embrace of the British Empire.'

Was it as simple as all that? The subsequent history of South Africa does not suggest it. How often, indeed, had Smuts not at the convention to use the final South African argument: 'Alles sal reg kom'—everything will come right. Did Natal fear Dutch predominance? Let Natal have a referendum. Did the Cape say the capital had to be in Cape Town and did the Transvaal say the capital had to be in Pretoria? Let there be two capitals. Two capitals? an impossibility. 'Without it', said Smuts, 'there will be no union.' Did the Transvaal and Free State insist on rejecting the native franchise? Did the Cape insist on retaining it?

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(And A. W. Lloyd draws a cartoon showing Merriman as Botha's bride, and a little native, with *Native Vote* written across his trousers, crying eagerly towards the bride: 'Mother!' and the bridegroom saying, 'This, my dear, is more than I bargained for'.) Let each state do as it chose about native franchise. Did everyone wonder what was to happen to natives as a whole? Why, that was the very reason they had to have union—it required 'a strong, central, unified Government' to solve the native problem. Let there only be union. Alles sal reg kom.

The people of the country were told nothing of what was going on except, to test their feeling, that there was argument about a capital, but Smuts persuaded them equally.

'The Boer', he said to them, 'has fought for his independence, the Englishman has fought for his Empire, all have fought for what they considered highest. Now the highest is union. . . . We do not know what lies ahead of us. To-day we are standing under the majesty and in the safety of the British flag, but we do not know what will be the case a hundred years hence, and there is only one thing the people of South Africa can do—become a united people. Let us have a union, not of top-dog and under-dog, but of brothers.'

'We in South Africa have been the spectators and actors in great events in the history of the world, they have stirred the passions and imaginations of the whole world, but we are now in for a bigger work than ever before. Let us see it through.'

'Let us make one big South Africa and do our best as wise and prudent sons of South Africa to start a union here and to rule the country from Table Bay to the Congo and even beyond that. Let us be the inventors of a great South Africa.'

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And when the nineteen delegates took the draft Act to England, and Balfour described it as 'the most wonderful issue out of all those divisions, controversies, battles, bloodshed, devastation and horrors of war, and of the difficulties of peace', and it passed through the Commons with only an alteration concerning Asiatics, and went then to the Lords—when, in the House of Lords, its fate was assured, and peers departed from benches and delegates from galleries, one only of the men who had made and brought the Act remained—that one whose thoughts were its fundament: Smuts. Above him, his head on the rails, strained and passionate, sat the native Tengo Jabavu, hearing, for his black brothers, what the English Parliament had to say concerning their hope and fate under the Union of South Africa.

Chapter XXVIII

THAT THREE HUNDRED POUNDS

I

‘Sheltering embrace of the British Empire’—‘most wonderful issue out of all those horrors of war and difficulties of peace’—‘Alles sal reg kom’—now to business!

There was, of course, immediate trouble. Botha was chosen to be the first Prime Minister of the Union, and it hurt Merriman and his Cape Province to the last degree. Merriman was twenty-one years older than Botha; he had twenty times Botha’s parliamentary experience and twenty times his education; he was Prime Minister of the classic European state in South Africa; he belonged to the conquering race—even if he had supported the Boers in the Boer War; he represented *England* in this deal between the English and Dutch. It was too terrible a chivalry that the first Prime Minister of the Union should be a Boer, however great. Merriman could not but feel himself betrayed and sacrificed. Botha became to him the symbol of a wrong. ‘He is going to humbug us, for sure,’ he said, and included Smuts in his grand distrust. Smuts told Parliament this a few years later: ‘Mr. Merriman admitted to me that he had doubted General Botha and myself. He used to think that, in the hour of trial, we should not stand by the policy we preached.’ To his constituents Merriman painfully wrote: ‘I shall give my support to the present Administration, bearing in mind those noble words of the great Nelson: “How-

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ever his services may be received it is not right for an officer to slacken in his zeal for his country. . . .” But he could not raise his heart to the level of his words. He could not bring himself to serve under Botha. He remained in the House, a private member, a long, thin, stooping, fading, shadowy old man.

2

A thing with which Botha and Smuts were concerned just before the first Union Parliament met did not help Meriman to great faith in them. Partly out of that exuberance which had induced them to present the King with the Cullinan diamond as a thankoffering for responsible government, partly out of what they considered a moral, if not a legal, obligation—just to make everyone happy—they encouraged the last Transvaal Parliament to vote each of its members three hundred pounds instead of the forty-two pounds to which, for the period they had sat, they were actually entitled.

It must be realised that not every Transvaaler was as eager as Smuts for union. To begin with, there was the underlying Boer fear of linking up with the older English colonies and so perhaps losing the new-won Boer independence. Then there was the fact that of all the colonies the Transvaal was the only one that had wealth, and really terrific wealth. ‘Here in the interior of South Africa’, Smuts told Parliament, ‘you have one of the richest mineral parts of the world—if not the richest known in history. . . . And the whole economic system of the world is to a large extent dependent on the Transvaal and will be in the future.’

He gave this as an argument for union. But there were many who saw in it an argument against union. Why use all this wealth to no better purpose than the rehabilitation of three other colonies—all in financial trouble—two of

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them English, and the third a friend in need, but, if one faced the truth, in a constant state of bankruptcy? Why undertake in perpetuity the burden of carrying the whole of South Africa, instead of doing—what could one not do for oneself with sixty—eighty—miles of gold mines, a mile—two miles—deep?

Compared with such considerations, the business of members' salaries was insignificant. But it was personal. There was talk of members facing the abrupt ending of their public careers, and, in conjunction with that, an abrupt termination, to some of them, of their private means. Were they not entitled to have their immediate needs safeguarded? Were they not entitled to the compensation, in lieu of notice, that any private concern would have given its employees on the eve of a grand amalgamation? They made themselves indignant about it, and Smuts, to this day, says they were right.

The old Transvaal Audit Act contained special provisions for the issue by Government of sums classed as 'unauthorised expenditure'. These sums might only be paid on a warrant signed by the Governor, and never while Parliament was sitting. The Lower House (the elected Assembly) passed unanimously a resolution that each member should get three hundred pounds instead of this forty-two pounds which was his legal due. As there seemed danger of opposition in the Upper House (the nominated Council), Smuts decided not to bring it before the Upper House at all. The Deputy Governor, on the authority of one House alone, and against the provisions of the Audit Act, was asked to issue a warrant for the money. . . .

There were members of the ignored Council who applied to the Supreme Court, as Transvaal tax-payers, for an interdict restraining the Government from making these payments. The Supreme Court declared the payments il-

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legal, but, as no one had suffered any particular damage, reluctantly could find no remedy for the tax-payers except in the hands of the Crown. The Deputy Governor consulted the Colonial Office, who said it was his duty to do as his ministers requested. He signed the warrant, and over twenty thousand pounds was distributed among the dear old members of the last Transvaal Parliament. That was the spirit. The councillors who had gone to law refused indignantly to take their share. In the House of Commons the Conservatives proposed 'the severest condemnation on the Colonial Office for having authorised the Deputy Governor, the representative of the King, to become a partner in a definitely declared breach of the law.'

Sir Rufus Isaacs, at the time Solicitor-General, and Colonel Seely, the Under-Secretary for Colonies, defended the Imperial Government.

'Do I understand,' asked Balfour, 'do I understand the Right Honourable gentleman to lay down the proposition that, within a few days of the highest court in the land saying that a course is illegal, that course is to be taken by the Governor, if his ministers think it right for him to do it?'

Colonel Seely: Yes.

Balfour: I must say that, in the whole history of constitutional government, so far as I know it, a more singular transaction has never taken place, or a more interesting example of financial management by a single chamber, or one which throws a more curious light upon the view which His Majesty's Government take of the duties they propose to throw upon the Colonial Governors they send out to these great Dominions. . . .

Not merely the dear old members but the dear old Transvaal itself got a farewell present through Smuts: the Transvaal was about to undertake the burden of the whole Union. Let at least the money it had on hand not be thrown

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immediately into the pool with the debts of all the provinces, and, in his words, 'frittered away' on their various necessities that union was inheriting. Once they legislated in a union, yes. Everything then for everybody. ('The pooling of assets, the pooling of beliefs and the pooling of patriotism.') Now with the last of its own money, Smuts proposed that the Transvaal should celebrate union as was fitting and glorious. He put at Sir Herbert Baker's disposal the Transvaal's own money for the Union Buildings at Pretoria—not a mere twenty thousand, but nearly all they cost, which was a million and a half.

He has not since regretted, nor has the Union, that care-free deed, but he was criticised for it at the time.

Chapter XXIX

MERELY JAN CHRISTIAN SMUTS

I

It may be admitted that Smuts has, on several occasions during his forty years of public life, taken the law into his own hands—simply told himself that the particular circumstances made law or convention impossible, and he would do what he personally felt the instance demanded, and people might object but he would pacify them afterwards, and, whether he pacified them or not, he knew he was right, and that was all the justification he needed. A perilous doctrine. Such doctrines destroy the sanctity of law and the liberty of nations. A doctrine, at the same time, that, like the breaking of the laws of grammar and composition, geniuses, for a certain effect, dare permit themselves.

It sometimes charms Smuts to call himself a shady politician. 'Yes, yes,' he says, Puck pushing Prospero from his face, 'I am one of those shady politicians you hear about.'

But it is the erect man, and not the hunchback, who mentions his stoop. Whatever has been said of Smuts—and much has been said, for he is an inexplicable man to South Africans: their history does not give precedents for men like him—no one, in all his years, has ventured to suggest, has thought to suggest, that Smuts would ever use his public power for private gain.

The idea that money, or the things money can buy,

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might influence Smuts in the least degree is as absurd as that they might influence Gandhi himself. 'What do I want with money?' he asks. 'What could I do with it? Rhodes needed money for his work. But I don't. Money would be a nuisance to me. Nothing but a nuisance. I should always have to be wasting my time thinking how to use or invest it. My children would be tempted to become loafers. Have I not burdens enough? Why should I burden myself with money?

'Besides, I don't find money interesting.'

2

'Besides' is, however, the wrong word.

The essential, not the additional, reason why a man fails to concern himself with a thing is that it does not interest him. Money, apart from the tedium of earning or spending, is a game. Smuts avoids playing the money game as he avoids playing any game that bores him.

For this reason, indeed—because he had no interest in money—he was not, in the first Union Parliament, considered a first-rate Minister of Finance. He understood the technique of figures (had headed mathematical lists at examinations as he headed lists in any subject anywhere) and his budget speech itself was satisfactory. But his opponents called him an indifferent and casual administrator, and, despite one or two significant inspirations he has had (such as following England off gold in 1931, which he cried up fifteen months before any other political leader did much besides jeer at him), it is not thought in South Africa that Smuts is a genius about money.

He does not act, in his private life, like a genius about money. The financiers with whom he has public contact do not influence his puritan outlook. He never makes the large, exciting transactions he might with all the information he

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gets about mines and shares, and as many South Africans do on the most casual gossip. For nothing but the needs of his children or farms has he ever taken an overdraft. He would not dream of buying shares on margin, or mortgaging a farm to make what he knows will be a successful deal on the Stock Exchange. 'Why didn't you buy gold shares when we went off gold and you, of all people, knew shares must boom?' 'I hadn't the money.' 'You could have borrowed it.' 'I don't borrow money to buy shares. The few shares I have I bought with cash and they have all gone down. I don't understand shares. I don't like to ask people about them. I understand land, and I put my savings into land.'

The economic attitude in the Smuts household is: Can we afford to send the children to Cambridge? Will the old car last another year? Can we afford to import a new bull? Would it pay us to breed pigs? What shall we do about our milk? Is this cheaper than that? Are we managing to save money?

For, indifferent as Smuts is to the money game, absolutely as he has put his public before his private life, despite that sort of temperament people have agreed to call artistic though it has nothing to do with art, Smuts provides, in the simple way of his ancestors, for his family. He believes in farms.

3

He first came to the idea of farming when union was under way. The dual capital business had to do with it.

For here is the difficulty men in the north have in making politics their career. As anywhere in the world, a Cabinet Minister can live on his salary but a private member can not, and the possibility of defeat at elections has to be considered. A member must accordingly have means in

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addition to his Parliamentary salary, or the background of a business or profession. Practically no South Africans have independent means. Cape Town, the legislative capital, is a thousand miles from Johannesburg or Pretoria. How is a young man in the north to conduct simultaneously his private and his public life? In fact, he cannot: and this is the reason why, in South Africa, the affairs of Parliament are not inevitably in the best hands.

Smuts, when it became clear that Cape Town was to get the legislative capital, had to make arrangements for his future and family. There were, by 1909, a son and three daughters (another son and daughter followed). What inevitably enters the mind of any South African when he wants to make himself secure, well though he knows that nothing in South Africa is less secure? He buys himself a farm.

Smuts bought himself a farm.

The farm he bought lies outside a village called Irene. It is ten miles from Pretoria and twenty-seven from Johannesburg and its name is Doornkloof. As he had not much money, he decided first to build himself a cheap temporary home, and later, when the farm paid and so on, to change it for something better. He bought, accordingly, for three hundred pounds, a corrugated iron building that during the Boer War had housed British officers, and this he carried in sheets to Doornkloof to make a house of it. It grew into an unexpectedly big house, but, unexpectedly also, it took a year to erect, and that erection cost a thousand pounds. . . . The family moved in, Mrs. Smuts made a little garden in front of the house, she had thousands of trees planted, farming began.

What Smuts says about the farm at Irene is that anything he has put into it is *there* and he has, from childhood, he says, been considered the best farmer in his family. But

what Mrs. Smuts says is that, with Smuts' aristocratic ideas of keeping cows costing a hundred pounds, so superior that they simply will not bother to live, he improves the breed of South African cattle generally, but he does not make money. The farm is accordingly a model farm in South Africa—imported cattle, engines, refrigerators, water drawn by electricity—but the old corrugated iron house has never been replaced, though one or two odd buildings have been erected besides.

This is the way the house looks:

It is a square, single-storeyed house of no particular style, painted green, with a narrow wooden verandah all the way round. It does not look a big house from the outside, but it has several enormous living rooms and eleven bedrooms. The inside of the house is lined with wood, blue or green (a fire would have a grand opportunity), and practically every single thing that, during the last quarter century, has entered the house seems still to be there. At this little decrepit table children sat when they first arrived at Doornkloof, and now grandchildren sit there. This drawing-room furniture was bought from relations twenty years ago: 'It did not', says Mrs. Smuts, 'look well in their house. But it is all right for ours.' Here are groups of bearded Republicans. Here are signed photographs of royalties and generals. Here are elephant tusks on a stand—'presented'. Here are pictures—artist's offering. Here are ornaments—we have always had them. Here are just things—they are South African things. South African things are a passion.

The only articles that are gone of the accumulations of half a lifetime are those given to married children—the best. But twelve chairs remain that Smuts' grandfather made, and a great old cupboard that has always been in the family. For the rest, nobody troubles about quality or beauty except that Smuts troubles about his books. And

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nobody troubles what anybody does anywhere in the house as long as nobody troubles Smuts among his books. His library is inviolate. Grandchildren may struggle under tables and over chairs, and shout up and down passages, and make noises in trees, but there is no grandchild so young (nor any being so intimate) that he does not know the library is, normally speaking, forbidden him.

Smuts' library has quality. It is tall and big and green-walled. Near the ceiling hang the flags he captured in German East and West; the rifle and bandolier he used in the Boer War; a Bushman bow with poisoned arrows from German West; a native shield and spears; a German Imperial shield. There are four original *Punch* cartoons. The desk ('presented') fits a statesman. There is not a book that has no meaning.

Here he comes to sit by himself. The house may be full of people: relations, connections, sick friends, children, the friends of children, grandchildren—the people Mrs. Smuts invites in her large heart and out of old Boer tradition . . . Smuts sits in his library by himself. He asks into it people who come on necessary business—the family does not obtrude.

The family never obtrudes on Smuts' individual life, not even Mrs. Smuts. He goes where he wants and does what he chooses—the family makes no demands. 'I am free', he says, 'as an angel.'

Occasionally, when he feels he would like to talk, he has into his library a few young people who awesomely ask him deep, consciously important questions: 'What sort of immortality do you believe in?' 'Do you believe in psychoanalysis?' 'Do you believe in telepathy?' 'Do you believe that war will come from the East, that Africa will go to the native, that America will link up with England? . . .' Generally he evades the questions, but sometimes he is

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lured, and he will then deliver himself with originality, but speaking widely rather than particularly, on the most surprising diversity of subjects—scientific, literary, philosophical, political—anything from Shakespeare to eschatology.

Three or four times a day he walks to his manager's house—principally for the reason that his manager is married to his eldest daughter and there are grandchildren. With these he plays. The feeling Smuts has for children—anybody's children, but the younger the better—is a sort of bewitchment. He carries them in his arms, they clamber over and under him, they play with his ribbons and orders and the golden keys with which he has opened this or that in different parts of the world. He sees in children, because they are children, extraordinary virtues. He does not ask whether mankind perhaps really misinterprets Nature in thinking she wants these endless couplings that beget children to beget children for no purpose but the begetting of children; nor consider (seeing that offspring grow rarer as creation grows higher) whether Nature's real goal may, after all, be, not the child-bearing couple, but the individual whose destiny it is to fulfil himself with himself and by himself and so end his line. The thought that life is going on, just going on in a broad and broadening stream to who knows what, terribly moves him. But he does not really attempt to explain why he loves children, nor pretend that he loves the individual rather than the class. He loves children and that is all.

4

He does not love dogs, he does not love gardens, he says he despises domesticated things. In this access of romanticism he one day decided that he did not want the little garden Mrs. Smuts had planted and the veld must come right

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up to the door. A poetic idea if the veld would indeed come up to the door. But it doesn't. The remains of a hedge still enclose the remains of a garden and then there is a road and then there are planted fields and then there are trees. The fields and trees about Doornkloof are beautiful. The air is sweet. There is a serenity that not even the birds and frogs can destroy. The trees are full of birds. Fruit is stuck on bare twigs to attract more birds. In the middle of a meal Smuts and Mrs. Smuts hurry to the door to investigate the twittering of unidentified, perhaps happily, even strange birds. The birds make all sorts of sounds from the flute notes to the creaking of rusty axles, they awake the sleeper at dawn, but Smuts finds every bird-noise equally enchanting.

He loves birds, he loves wild plants, he is a notable botanist. His happiness is to take a car into the veld and look for new grasses. He is a specialist on grasses. At one time his library was obstructed by cupboards full of grasses. That sort of life, life alone on the veld or the mountains, is his rest. 'I was so tired', he said recently, 'I hadn't the strength to do more than climb the mountains.'

He meant the mountains of the Cape, the climbing of which nearly undid him in February of 1935.

Chapter XXX

THE DISSATISFACTION OF GENERAL HERTZOG

I

Except for the few days he wrenches out of time to go somewhere, except that he sleeps well, Smuts has not rested for thirty years. Perhaps it is not in him to rest. Even when he sits still he does not look as if he is resting. Often he cannot sit still. He moves about in his chair. He listens with an effort. He does not seem to listen. He rises suddenly with a cup in his hand. He walks up and down a room. . . .

He has never hesitated to do the work of three or four men.

In the first Union Parliament he held the offices of Interior, Mines and Defence. Presently he substituted for Mines and Interior that of Finance. The nine other ministers began with one portfolio each. . . .

There had been some talk before Botha's party took office of a coalition Government. How better could union be exemplified than by a coalition Government? But there was a limit to the Boers' passion for union. What? Jameson of the Raid? They refused.

An election accordingly took place in which Botha, the destined Prime Minister, was defeated at Pretoria—on account, it was said, of General Hertzog's education policy. But the Boers came in; Botha got, of course, another seat

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and, in one form or another, sometimes with the English and sometimes without, mostly with Smuts but sometimes without, now in this combination and now in that, under various names, under recurring names, under different styles and systems that remain nevertheless the same, they have stayed in for a quarter of a century. In the beginning they complained that they were not sufficiently considered. It happens, however, that, from the time of union, the direction of Parliament has been in the hands of Boers. To-day the talk is that all white people are equally South African. And who knows? Perhaps they are.

2

It has just been said that the Boers complained in the beginning that they were not sufficiently considered. From the time Smuts had made English compulsory in the Transvaal Education Act and Dutch optional, Boers like General Hertzog had felt there was discrimination against the Boers, and, worst of all, by those too conciliatory Boers themselves—Botha and Smuts.

As soon as Botha began to form his Cabinet—before even the results of the polls were announced—he had trouble about General Hertzog. General Hertzog, being the real, if not the titular, leader of the Free State's seventeen representatives (it was called the Free State again since union), had clearly the right to a seat in the Cabinet. Natal, on the other hand, the most purely British part of South Africa, distrusted his Anglophobe passion. It seemed impossible that Natal and the Free State could be happy in the same Cabinet. He was asked, nevertheless, to come to Cape Town with the other prospective ministers while Cabinet-making went on.

Cabinet-making went on and he waited. The days passed. Was he to be invited or not? Patience is not General Hertzog's most striking quality. He waited.

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One day Smuts took breakfast with him. Here is an extract from General Hertzog's diary:

'May 10: Breakfast with Smuts. Smuts suggests I . . . go to Court of Appeal. . . . Replied: I could not do so without playing false to my people. Smuts' reason for going to Court of Appeal. . . . I have my doubts re reasons assigned.'

The next thing he heard was that a temporary ministry would be formed, consisting of only seven members, and that the remaining three seats would be filled after polling day.

So this was how they were putting him off! He noted in his diary Botha's 'weakness and lack of principle which finds such perfect expression in his manner of carrying out his so-called policy of conciliation.'

It was only a week before the Union Cabinet had to be announced that for the first time General Hertzog was invited to meet Botha at his hotel. At the hotel he saw, not Botha, but Smuts, was taken to Smuts' room, and Smuts told him he was to have the Ministry of Justice. Afterwards he met Botha, 'who did not speak a single word to me personally on the subject, but took up the attitude of having already finally discussed everything with me, and my inclusion in the Ministry and the Department which I was to control were simply mentioned as a matter which had been decided. It was known to all.

'There was no mistaking the reluctance with which the Prime Minister accepted me as a colleague.'

Nor was there any mistaking the resentment with which General Hertzog, from that day to the day of Botha's death and afterwards, regarded this reluctance.

No one expected the Cabinet to sit out its full term without an explosion, and it did not. Throughout the next two

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years General Hertzog was complaining about Botha's treatment of the Boer language, the Boer people, and, more than anything, himself, their essential representative. Every now and then he threatened to resign. 'I told General Botha that unless that same morning a resolution was taken to my satisfaction to put an end to the feebleness of the Government's conduct, I should that very day put my resignation in his hands. . . .' 'I had constantly to struggle with the Prime Minister. What the result of this was bound to be as regards General Botha's attitude to me must be evident to all who bear in mind how I was included in the Ministry against his wish. His confidence was withheld from me and his attitude became increasingly hostile.' '(I told him) I was not prepared to work with him any longer unless I enjoyed his confidence, and he showed a more friendly attitude towards me. . . .' 'He could not say a single word in reply to my charge that he had treated me with want of confidence.'

It was not that General Hertzog wanted this trouble for which he was looking. He was looking for it (so these things are) precisely because he did not want it. He saw himself now the champion of his people. He was anxious, for that reason, to remain in the Cabinet. He made, indeed, one or two attempts to avoid trouble. Early in 1912 he said in a public speech: 'There is nothing on earth that I honour and respect more than the great British Empire, and the great men and the great deeds by which it was established. If the day comes—which I hope will never arrive—that the British Empire has need of men to help her, then I and those who are of my opinion will be at our posts, and others possibly not.'

A little while after he seconded a motion for the deletion of the word 'National' from the party constitution: 'The word National is too narrow. It refers too much to the

Dutch-speaking section of the South African people. Our wish is to form a party which will embrace all white people in South Africa. . . .'

Botha's party ceased, accordingly, to be the South African National Party and became the South African Party. When, however, General Hertzog finally quarrelled with him he called his own party the National Party and when, twenty years later, Smuts united the South African Party with General Hertzog's National Party the combination was called the United South African National Party, and so everything was again as it had been in the beginning.

Before that final quarrel came Botha too tried to be amiable. The Minister of Finance had found himself unable to bear the Minister of Railways and had resigned. Smuts took Finance, other rearrangements were made and General Hertzog was gracefully offered, in addition to Justice, Native Affairs.

But how long could this pretence of friendliness go on? It is in the Dutch character, and particularly in General Hertzog's, to be excessively influenced by personal feelings. The history of South Africa is based on personal feelings. Botha distrusted him and he distrusted Botha. Behind everything was the conviction that Botha was becoming intolerably British: attending a conference of Prime Ministers in London which no longer called itself a Colonial, but an Imperial, Conference; taking orders from London; wearing knee-breeches and silk stockings at a King's levée. For nothing in his life was Botha so much condemned by every irreconcilable Boer as for those significant silk stockings. They were as the fine clothes of the fallen daughter to the puritan household. A Boer of the veld in England's silk stockings! Could there be an apter symbol of a national prostitution? A pair of silk stockings! The very words sounded an abandonment.

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Botha came back from the conference speaking of European immigration to South Africa. He thought South Africa should make a contribution to the British Navy. He became an honorary general in the British Army. He became a Privy Councillor. He offered amabilities about Rhodes at the unveiling of his memorial at Groote Schuur—that home Rhodes had bequeathed to the Prime Ministers of South Africa, where Botha was now living, and where only Dutch Prime Ministers have ever lived.

Well indeed might he wear that pair of silk stockings. . . .

It was towards the end of the year that General Hertzog finally quarrelled with Botha. Or that Botha finally quarrelled with him. Or that everybody, as was inevitable in a union so speedy and not entirely composed of Smutses, finally quarrelled with everybody else.

One day in October 1912 General Hertzog abandoned himself suddenly to his passion. South Africa would no longer, he asserted, consent to be governed by aliens. . . . They were now making common cause against the foreign adventurers, chiefly English-speaking, who came to South Africa. . . .

When members of the Opposition in those days met members of the Government, they barely spoke to one another. Early in December, at a place called de Wildt, General Hertzog declared himself once and for all: 'South Africa must be governed by pure Afrikaners. . . . The main object is to keep Dutch and English separated. . . .'

'I am not one of those who always have their mouths full of conciliation and loyalty, for these are vain words that deceive no one. . . . I have always said that I do not know what conciliation means. . . .'

'I believe in Imperialism only so far as it benefits South Africa. Wherever it is at variance with the interests of South

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Africa I am strongly opposed to it. I am ready to stake my future as a politician on this doctrine. . . .’

A Government candidate in a by-election was defeated because Botha’s party, it was said, spoke with two voices. A Colonel Leuchars, a Natal minister, proclaimed that he would no longer bear General Hertzog’s attacks on the English, his attitude of being ready ‘to use the Empire till he had finished with it and then throw it aside like a sucked orange’, and he handed in his resignation.

A fellow Free Stater brought General Hertzog a letter to sign which offered apology and promised reformation. But he discovered that Smuts had written the letter and refused to sign. ‘The man in whose head it could have come to write such a thing must either have taken me for a lunatic, or the place where he belongs is the lunatic asylum.’

He refused also to follow the Natal minister out of the Cabinet.

Next day Botha’s private secretary told him that Botha himself had resigned.

Botha formed a new ministry. The aggrieved Natal minister was not in it, nor was General Hertzog.

General Hertzog issued a long manifesto: ‘It is our duty to see that we develop a higher national life. . . . When we have developed such a national feeling, the man of Dutch speech and the man of English speech will say, each to each: “Your language, your great men, your historic deeds, your noble characters are also my language, my great men, my historic deeds, my noble characters, because we are both South African.”’

What sentiment could be more admirable?

He ended: ‘I continued to labour loyally at General Botha’s side, in the firm confidence that his wanderings were to be attributed to nothing worse than temporary aberration in the path of our national welfare. Till the crisis

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came I resisted the conviction that there was calculated purpose in his conduct. . . . General Botha's path is not mine. . . . General Botha, the unconcerned surrenderer of the Dutch people's rights, I, their champion. . . .'

In a House of a hundred and twenty-one members eight were with him. For another year he remained on the surface a member of Botha's party. Then he formed a party of his own which proposed a vote of no confidence in Botha. In the Free State, Steyn, the ex-President, and de Wet, the guerrilla fighter (refusing, as he said, to conciliate his neighbour by giving him his shirt), joined him. In the Cape, Dr. Malan, once a schoolmaster, then a predikant, then the editor of a paper called *Die Burger*, joined him. In the Transvaal, Tielman Roos, a rising barrister, who had already announced that he would rather 'stand with his own people on a dung-heap than upon the most glittering platform with strangers'—he joined him. F. W. Reitz, who had been Smuts' associate under Kruger, joined him. The backvelders joined him.

Here began a fight that, for twenty years, was conducted first against Botha (with him Smuts), and, on Botha's death, against Smuts alone . . . that, after General Hertzog's reconciliation with Smuts, was inherited by Dr. Malan . . . that disrupted and all but ruined South Africa . . . that, without question, stimulated the pride, fostered the strength, preserved the nationality of the Dutch—the Boers—they called themselves henceforth the Afrikaner people of South Africa.

Chapter XXXI

SMUTS VERSUS STRIKERS

I

A Union . . . of Brothers. . . The quarrel between the Ministers of Railways and Finance had been a quarrel between the Cape and Transvaal. The Hertzog-Botha-Leuchars quarrel had involved the Free State, Transvaal and Natal.

Merriman had wanted to be Prime Minister and was not. Jameson had wanted a coalition Government—there was not. Beyers, Boer War colleague of Botha and Smuts, ex-Speaker of the Transvaal Assembly, had wanted to be Union Speaker—he was not. Botha, exhausted by all these wantings, wanted himself to resign. The Indians were passively resisting. The farmers were complaining about encroaching natives. The workers were complaining about the natives. The railwaymen were threatening to strike. The miners were threatening to strike. South Africa feared, no less than England, that trouble was coming out of Germany. . . .

From the Colonial—the Imperial—Conference in London, Botha and Smuts had brought back ideas concerning the necessity of defence. And so Smuts, as soon as Parliament was in its stride, had introduced a scheme for a Defence Force. He had already, within a few months after union, brought forward bills concerning immigration, industrial legislation, census enumeration, Parliamentary regis-

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tration, public holidays, public service, and (with the profundity of a practised physician and expert chemist—so they said) miners' phthisis. He now spoke for two and a half hours on the subject of defence—without looking at a note, without hesitation, and summarising, finally, his speech in Dutch. . . .

How necessary in the union of brothers was a Defence Force! Beyers was put at its head. . . .

2

Johannesburg is a thousand miles from Cape Town and thirty-five miles from Pretoria. It has a growing population now of half a million, black and white; the air of a metropolis; imaginative homes and gardens; and a fundamental poverty of city-design that not all its tall buildings can redeem from a lively ugliness. The mines are part of Johannesburg. Their dumps, like pyramids of tarnished silver, may be seen from certain ridges—even as many as eighteen or twenty dumps at once—and at the ends of the streets. The mines are all round Johannesburg. They run in a line, which to-day is eighty miles long—wall to wall below the earth, a mile or a mile and a half deep, falling rock causing the city sometimes to shake—from east to west through Johannesburg.

The city pursues the mines from east to west. There is the shopping centre, then come the tall office-buildings, then the wholesale shops, then the big warehouses and garages. The shops dwindle from wholesale to retail; Oriental names appear on sign boards; Indian tailor shops appear—Chinese clubs, native eating houses, the crazy sheds of corrugated iron in whose yards swarm together black, brown, yellow and white. Here live the poor whites and backvelders and down-and-outs, the aspiring Orientals, the

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kraal-escaping natives—all come to Johannesburg for what its gold may breed.

The other people of Johannesburg are the men in the city: the white-collar men, the overall men; the white miners underground—near their homes; the natives all compounded.

The mines and railways are the only great coherent industries in South Africa.

Johannesburg stands six thousand feet above sea-level and its air is exciting.

Because of the strange unmixed population, because of the maddening industry that carries all South Africa, because of the strong high air, everything starts in Johannesburg.

3

It will be remembered that Smuts, by using force to stop a miners' strike in 1907, had antagonised Labour. The miners in 1913 were no longer what they had been in the old Transvaal days. The original Cornishmen were dead, or they were coughing out their stony lungs on phthisis pensions, or they had returned to England. And now, in better, wiser conditions, South Africans had replaced them—mostly illiterate backvelders to whom a miner's money had seemed great wealth—until men had arrived from heaven knows where to persuade them that things with South African workers were not as they should be.

General Hertzog began to see in labouring men support for his own views. His followers and Labour often voted together against the Government.

And about the middle of 1913 there broke out the first of a connected series of strikes which continued for nine years, which were stimulated not merely by class, but by racial antipathies, and which brought the country to the edge of destruction.

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The distinguishable starting point was this: a manager on one of the lesser Rand mines changed the Saturday working hours of five underground mechanics without what they regarded as adequate justice or compensation, and all the workers on that mine went on strike.

They were asked, two days later, to return, and thirty-one did return. But afterwards, when peace was proposed between masters and men as a whole, the men insisted on the dismissal of the thirty-one strike-breakers, and the masters refused to dismiss them. No one showed the slightest tact.

The strike continued. The strikers went from mine to mine 'pulling out', by talk or force, other miners. The few police were helpless. Of the thirty thousand imperial troops left in the country after the 1902 peace, only seventeen thousand now remained. The old Volunteer Force was disbanded and Smuts' new Defence Force was still in process of formation. Was the strike timed for this? Many people wondered.

The strike spread. It spread to the city of Johannesburg—that Mecca, as Smuts bitterly called it—of hooliganism. It involved other industries.

Hooligan mobs—poor whites and out-of-works—joined the strikers; firearm shops were looted; the houses of strike-breakers burnt down; casual, innocent men and women killed. Independent people offered to mediate, but the working hours of the five underground mechanics, the original strikers, the original strike-breakers were affairs now in the dim and different—the inconsequent—past. Intervention was refused by both men and masters, and by July Smuts was asking Lord Gladstone, the first Union Governor-General and High Commissioner, for the help of the imperial troops.

The Colonial Office cabled from England that, as far as

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possible, local troops were to be used rather than imperial troops—they preferred the Union of Brothers to settle their own troubles. Three thousand policemen and a number of special constables were therefore assembled, and these, with three thousand imperial troops, opposed the strikers along the whole Reef, with the necessity also of watching the quarter-million natives in the mine compounds. They came, however, as Gladstone himself said, too late—things had gone too far.

On July 4th rioting broke out in the centre of Johannesburg, the railway station and the premises of the *Star* newspaper were attacked and partly burnt down, and the offices of the mine-owners were threatened. Next day there took place outside the Rand Club, rendezvous of the mine-owners, a pitched battle which Mr. H. G. Wells (on information given him by his brother, who lived in Johannesburg) has almost accurately described in *The Research Magnificent*. The battle was between the police, the imperial troops and the strikers. The Government forces naturally had the best of it. There was a warning—totally ignored. . . . 'Shoot!' cried a man called Labuschagne, opening out his arms and offering his chest, and they did shoot. . . . Twenty-one people were killed and forty-seven wounded, and some of them were not strikers at all.

4

The battle was merely interrupted when Botha and Smuts motored up from Pretoria.

They drove through the wild crowds of Johannesburg city to the Carlton Hotel (which is not, as Mr. Wells thinks, in sight of the Rand Club). There they met four delegates representing the Federation of Trade Unions, whose joint committee numbered forty-six.

The main entrance of the hotel was guarded by armed

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police. Except for Botha and Smuts, all negotiators carried revolvers.

While the discussions went on, the strikers raged outside. There were thousands of strikers and hooligans. The police and imperial troops watched them.

The strikers' representatives complained that the police and soldiery—parading the streets, dispersing the crowds—were not observing the agreed truce. And if, said someone in the crowd, if the troops fired, then they, in turn—the strikers—would shoot Botha and Smuts. 'The soldiers', declared a strike leader afterwards, 'had their rifles at the "present", and I heard one of the men say to the Generals words to the effect that did the troops open fire, the Generals would be shot. I don't know who said it, but it was said. Both General Smuts and Botha were covered by two of our men with revolvers, and if the troops had shot down anyone at the moment I was satisfied that the two Generals would have lost their lives. I can assure General Smuts that he and General Botha were covered.'

Smuts says he has no doubt people carried firearms and offered threats, but neither did he and Botha know they were covered, nor were they physically compelled. 'We made peace because the police and imperial forces informed us that the mob was beyond their control, and that if quiet was not immediately restored, anything could happen in Johannesburg that night: the town might be sacked, the mines permanently ruined. We were not in a position to think of our own feelings. We could not afford to wait until Johannesburg and the mines were blown up. We had to regain control and prepare for an even worse situation which might come—which did come. . . .'

A peace was made that Smuts told Parliament it humiliated him to sign. 'One of the hardest things I have ever had to do', he called it. 'But I have learnt in this life that humil-

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iation and disgrace are sometimes necessary in order to effect a great public service.' Civil war, he said, threatened, and so they yielded to the strikers. They made a settlement with the syndicalists (as Smuts called them) which the syndicalists themselves, he said, hoped would never be made, since peace was not what they wanted. They yielded the strikers' demands entirely: strikers were to be reinstated. Scabs were to be dismissed and compensated by the Government. Trade unions were to be recognised. Grievances were to be investigated.

After the settlement the strikers' representatives went to their committee for its ratification and Botha and Smuts drove to another hotel through the threatening crowds.

'Shoot', Botha shouted to them. 'You can shoot. We are unarmed. But you know this: that we are here to make peace for you people, and if we are shot, that is all finished.'

Smuts said nothing. He sat silent in his fury and humiliation. This was not the end, he thought, and if the end held further humiliation, it would not, he vowed, be the humiliation of himself or his Government.

5

In Smuts' own constituency of Pretoria West lived and voted most of the men employed on the station and in the locomotive works and running sheds of the railways. Incensed by rumours of impending retrenchment, they demanded the resignation of Botha, they demanded Smuts' support, as their representative, of that demand. . . . On his refusal to satisfy them, they howled him down.

Of this dissatisfaction the syndicalist leaders now proposed to take advantage. They were elated at their last victory over the Government. They presented an ultimatum to the Government requiring (as Smuts said) 'an answer of

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“yes” or “no” to a long list of concessions, some calculated to turn topsy-turvy the whole economy of the Union’. Failing such concessions, a general strike was to begin with the stopping of the coal supply, the consequent paralysing of the entire railway system, the isolation of Johannesburg. In a Johannesburg distracted by the thought of the quarter-million of natives underground (some of whom were already out of hand) the white miners would take control. ‘I cannot conceive’, Smuts later told Parliament, ‘anything more diabolical that could have been done by a hostile invading force than these peaceable citizens proposed to do: To terrorise and starve the community into abject surrender.’

6

In January 1914 the General Strike Committee issued the following letter to trades unions:

‘The General Strike Committee herewith request your society to organise all your members into commandos for the greater efficiency of the Federation forces.’ One strike leader was appointed Controller of Pickets, and another Controller of Military Equipment. . . .

Smuts, for his part, called out his citizen force and burghers and proclaimed martial law along the Reef. Among the burghers was Deneys Reitz with a Free State commando, and he found, as he rode with them towards the Vaal River on the way to Johannesburg, that their resentment was not against the strikers but against Botha, and what they really wanted to do was to take this excellent opportunity of attacking Botha. They held meetings and made mutinous speeches, and it was with difficulty they were persuaded to fulfil their due mission.

At a mining town eight miles from Johannesburg they were ordered to stop, and there Commandant-General

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Beyers, head of the Union's defences, came to inspect his forces.

7

He wore, says Colonel Reitz, full uniform—feathered helmet, sword and all—and he addressed them. 'His speech was a scarcely veiled attack on the Government and on Botha and Smuts. He ended by saying that these English townspeople had forgotten what a Boer commando looked like, and it was time we refreshed their memories. He then ordered us to follow him through the streets. . . .

'Our men said openly that Beyers should utilise the commandos on the Reef to overthrow Botha's Government, and I heard talk of his intending to proclaim a republic. Indeed, Red Daniel Opperman, by whose side I had fought at the Battle of Spion Kop . . . told me that Beyers had asked him the day before whether the burghers would support him in case he arrested Botha and Smuts. . . .'

Red Daniel Opperman—Colonel Opperman—afterwards told Smuts the same story. And there were many who came to think it was a visit Beyers had paid to Germany a while before which influenced his conduct in 1914. In Germany Beyers had been overwhelmed by the Germans' military manoeuvres and the Kaiser's particular notice, and for the recollection of those glorious moments he presently lost his life. . . .

Now Smuts telegraphed to the officer commanding the Rand Light Infantry: 'Exercise greatest severity. Keep all strikers off railway line or railway premises. Don't hesitate to shoot if any attempt to enter after warning, or if on apparently malicious intent'; and de la Rey, who was in charge in Johannesburg, threatened to blow up the Trades Hall unless the strikers surrendered.

The strike leaders surrendered. There were nine of them,

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not one born in the country. Smuts had them sent, first, to gaol. At midnight they were removed from gaol, put on a train and rushed to Durban.

Next day application was made to the Supreme Court for a writ of Habeas Corpus to produce the men in court. The court then heard, and the country heard for the first time, that the nine strike leaders were well away on the high seas—deported from Durban on a steamer that was not to stop at any port before reaching London. Another vessel, hired by Labour men, followed them for some distance in vain.

And now it was South Africa, Smuts told Parliament, that was on trial in the eyes of the world for the extraordinary measures it had thought fit to take against the syndicalist rising.

He said South Africa, but he meant, of course, himself.

8

He said it when he came to ask Parliament to indemnify Government for its declaration of martial law and the actions that followed. Everyone else was excited, but not Smuts.

Generally Smuts speaks from a few bare notes on a small sheet. Now he spoke for three and a half hours one day and for two hours the next day from a mass of material like a barrister's great brief—without rhetoric, gravely and sternly. No one interrupted all the time he spoke—not even the Labour members.

He did not attempt to minimise the enormity of deporting men without trial, or the effect in a free country of a Government's illegal action.

The difficulty, he said, was that by no legal means could these men be put out of the way. Their crime was not high treason according to the definition of treason inherited by

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law from the Middle Ages. Syndicalism was a new development for which no legal provision had ever been made in South African law. The strike leaders, men not born in the country, 'men who, without a doubt, were here for no other purpose than to keep alive a propagation of revolutionary industrialism', had been arrested, but they could not be convicted of any specific crime. 'Under South African law there is no serious crime for which the deported leaders could even have been tried. I would have had to create a special crime and devise a special punishment.' A special Act of Parliament would have been needed, and it would have been *ex post facto* legislation. They would meanwhile have had to be released on bail; influences of class, humanitarianism and electioneering would have thrust into the background the real meaning of past events; Government would never have been granted the requisite powers to deal with the case; the syndicalists, who had already in six months made three attempts at industrial revolution, would have remained free to try to force the Government to its knees by terrorism. 'It was with no gaiety of heart that we resolved on these deportations, but only after the most serious, prolonged and anxious deliberation. . . . A smashing blow had to be struck at syndicalism, not for the pleasure of delivering a smashing blow, but as a wholesome and absolutely indispensable deterrent.'

He added that the original list of men to be deported had been very much larger. 'Believe me, there are a great number of consummate scoundrels still remaining in the country.'

Well, the Government had been a popular Government (said Smuts). It could have chosen to remain a popular Government—to go so far and no farther and keep in with everybody. 'That is the point where weak men fail.' The question, he said at the third reading of the Indemnity Bill, was 'whether in January last the country was face to

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face with a revolution. That, too, was the question in July.' And what was the Government's alternative to the deportations? 'That ultimate, detestable, useless weapon of Governments—a fusillade against the uncontrollable violence of excited mobs.' He did not say the position was so awkward that his own Commandant General thought of arresting him and the Prime Minister.

9

'We have educated our men on a scientific method', one of the deported strike leaders said in London. 'None of your six months' strike and go hungry. We don't believe in that in South Africa. We believe in a fight between organised labour and the ruling class, and the fight has to be short, sharp and to the point.'

'We believe', said another, 'in scientific striking over there in South Africa—in calling a strike when it is least expected. Our decision paralyses business and demoralises industry, and all the time how do the workers fare? Instead of drawing strike pay, they are paid by the boss in full.'

Smuts' Indemnity Bill was carried by ninety-five votes to eleven. But Labour had tasted blood. In the Transvaal Provincial Council there was straightaway a Labour majority. The name of Labour received, for the first time, a vital meaning and power in Parliament itself. General Hertzog sought and found a new body of adherents. Strikes, war, revolution followed. 'In the end', says Smuts to-day, 'I was the person who suffered, and I knew at the time I would suffer. But I did what I thought was right for the country, and I am glad I did it, and I would do it again. It was my duty.'

10

He says it with a certain defiance, but none the less with truth. There is perhaps only one action in his life (it hap-

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pened five years later) which Smuts truly regrets . . . not because he admits it was wrong but because he cannot say it involved any spiritual conviction on his part. Most of the other actions in his life are so characteristic of his spirit, so consistently in keeping with his instincts, that it is difficult to get Smuts seriously to admit he has ever made a mistake. If he believes in himself, he must believe in actions founded on himself. He will say in his own airy fashion: 'Mistakes? I go from one to another. My life is a carpet of mistakes.' But ask him for a particular instance, and it goes like this:

'My opponents would call the 1914 deportations a mistake. I have friends in England who can't look me in the face over that business. No, they can't talk about it, they think it is so terrible—piracy, something of that nature. Certainly, it was a political misfortune—a misfortune, not a mistake—of the first water. But was it morally wrong? No, I would never say that. What was I to do with those men if I had no legal machinery to keep them in gaol? Release them like a box of germs on the community? Any other Government would have shot them. You can take it from me, they deserved to be shot. Well, I got rid of them in my own way, and they had every reason to be thankful. They became heroes in England. They ultimately returned to South Africa. Some of them even came to work for my own party. I took them on. My whole life was haunted by the deportation affair, but for them it was finished. So why not? I took them on. One of them, who became a South African Party secretary, used to tell a story in England the point of which was that once, when the Devil was on sick-leave, I took his place and made such a success of the job that the Lord would not take the old Devil back again, but kept me instead. I don't know if it was a new story. Sometimes it seems to me that the whole business of the 1914 deportations is no more than a good story, and I have to smile

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at it to myself, as also over the Jameson Raid. If only people would laugh a little more in this country! . . . There the Court was sitting, innocently waiting for the men to appear, and where were they? On the high seas. Out of South Africa. Spirited away. You know, it was really a smart piece of work—a smart piece of work, even if it did, in a way, ruin my career.'

They all said in South Africa that the deportations had ruined Smuts' career. Irretrievably. Yet there was that coming—not only to South Africa, but to all the world—which gave him a career such as has never fallen to any other South African.

'The scene of operations', he said to his own created Defence Force on September 5th, 1914, 'is far from our shores, and we seem to be entirely outside the disputes which have led to the state of war prevailing in the world to-day. But, officers and men, I need not tell you that, though apparently we stand outside and at some distance from the actual conflict, yet, at any moment—perhaps on the most unexpected occasion—we may be drawn into the vortex.'

And, indeed, even as he spoke, he knew that South Africa was well in it—of all countries out of Europe and the near East, deepest in the vortex of the Great War.

Chapter XXXII

GERMAN ADMINISTRATION IN AFRICA

I

The whole of Africa, except Abyssinia and the Spanish protectorates, was involved in the Great War.

This is the way the map of Africa was arranged in 1914: At the narrow southernmost end lay the Union of South Africa. There were three native territories—Basutoland, Swaziland and Bechuanaland, and provision had been made that if the Union wanted them, and it seemed good to England (the first has happened, but not the second), England would not stand in the way of their entering the Union. Of these territories, Basutoland, quite small, was jammed into the middle of the Union; Swaziland, still smaller, lay between the Transvaal and Portuguese East Africa; Bechuanaland sprawled—almost as large as the Union itself—across the middle of South Africa and led to the various native lands Rhodes made his own which are now called the Rhodesias. After the Rhodesias and Portuguese East Africa came German East Africa and then British East Africa.

On the west the Orange River divided the Union from the territory called German South-West Africa. Near this border Smuts had made his last stand in the Boer War, besieging and taking, as the final event in the war, the copper-mining village of O'okiep. The Union had the only

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harbour in German South-West Africa suitable for a naval base—Walfisch Bay.

Above German South-West Africa, and opposite German East Africa, came Portuguese West Africa. Above Portuguese West Africa, in an equatorial row with Belgian Congo and British East Africa, came French Congo. Where Africa begins to swell big in the west towards the Gold and Ivory Coasts lay the Cameroons, and then, after Nigeria, Togoland.

The colonies Germany had in Africa were thus German West, between the Union and Portuguese West; German East, between Portuguese East and British East; the Cameroons and Togoland, mixed up with French, British and Negroes. It had nothing in the middle.

The policy of German colonisation in Africa had begun in 1884.

2

In the year 1884 Bismarck, who had never before wanted colonies, decided suddenly to spread Frederick the Great's policy beyond the confines of Europe. 'If Prussia', Frederick the Great had said, 'is to count for something in the councils of Europe, she must be made a Great Power.'

Now, in the early eighteen-eighties, the explorer Stanley had, by his lectures, awakened Germany to the idea of Africa; German missionaries had asked for protection along the west coast; Karl Peters was selling concessions he had picked up—for something, for nothing—on the east coast; German merchants demanded markets; Germany and England were becoming steadily more antagonistic to one another.

The first of all men to realise the position fully was Rhodes. Germany was on the way to Africa; Germany was going to block England's path from the Cape to Cairo;

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Germans were already on the west coast when Rhodes hurried forth to stop their further progress by taking Bechuanaland. They were coming, led by Karl Peters, to the east coast. . . .

What had been the charter of Raleigh, the first English coloniser? He might 'take any remote barbarians and heathen lands not possessed by any Christian prince or people'. Who could stop the first comer to a land from taking it? Certainly not the laws of nations.

The Germans had as much right to take Africa as anybody else. Anybody who could had as much right to take Africa as anybody else. The Japanese, once they were recognised to be the equals of a Christian people, had as much right (and they wanted it) as anybody else. It did not depend on the natives of the land. In international law the natives had no right. It depended on who (except the natives) came first, on questions of expediency, on the strength to take and hold.

It remains like that. Have the forces of civilisation to accompany the national forces that take and hold?

That also international law does not say.

3

The Herero (native) population that lived in what became German South-West Africa was in 1877 (a British commission reported) eighty-five thousand. Two years after the Germans incorporated it in German South-West Africa, the German Governor Lautwein estimated it at eighty thousand. After the Herero rebellion in 1911, a census showed the numbers to be fifteen thousand, one hundred and thirty.

The cause of the Hereros' rebellion, according to the report, was systematic ill-treatment, flogging, appropriation of cattle, debauching of women, interference with native

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customs, denial of justice. The chief measure used to suppress the rebellion, says the report, was extermination. 'Kill every one of them and take no prisoners', said Governor von Trotha as the rebellion was ending. . . . 'I wished to ensure that never again would there be another Herero rebellion', he said.

When Germany took German South-West in 1892 the Hereros had a hundred and fifty thousand head of cattle. Ten years later they had forty-six thousand. By the end of 1905 they had no cattle. In 1907 the German Government, by ordinance, would not let them own cattle.

On May 31st, 1912, Governor Seitz issued the following circular to the magistrates of German South-West Africa:

'Windhoek.

'Secret and Personal.

'Within recent weeks I have received information from various quarters to the effect that a desperate feeling is becoming prevalent of late amongst the natives in certain areas of the country.

'The reason which is unanimously given for this fact is that brutal excesses of Europeans against natives are alarmingly on the increase. It is much to be regretted in this connection that even police officials have become guilty of such offences in a few cases—and that such offences do not find the punishment before the courts of law which they ought to receive according to the sense of justice of the natives.

'In consequence thereof the natives are supposed to despair of the impartiality of our jurisdiction and to be driven into blind hatred of everything that is white. And, as a final resort, would resort to self-help—that is, another rising.

'It is quite evident that such feelings of hatred among the natives, if such amelioration of their lot is not energetically

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provided for, must lead within a short space of time to a renewed and desperate native rising, and consequently the economic ruin of the country.

'It is therefore in the interests of the whole European population that persons who rage in mad irritability against the natives, and who consider their white skins a charter of indemnity from punishment for the most brutal crimes, be rendered innocuous by all possible means. . . .'

He did not see that they would be rendered innocuous in little over two years by the Union of South Africa. Certainly German East Africa, up near the equator, never expected retribution from the Union of South Africa.

4

Was retribution, humanly speaking, deserved?

In 1897 Dr. Karl Peters, the taker of German East Africa, was tried for his administration of that territory. Evidence was given of terrorism, plunder, burning of villages, flogging and chaining of women and children, forced concubinage and murder. He was found guilty on all counts. Herr von Puttkamer, Governor of the Cameroons, was charged with similar offences, fined a thousand marks and reprimanded.

On March 24th, 1906, Herr Bebel, leader of the Social-Democrat Party in the Reichstag, said:

'The German Government has simply abolished the existing civil laws of the natives in the German colonies. . . . The legal position of the blacks is miserable in the extreme. The honour of the German name suffers under this absolutely arbitrary system. We have lost the sympathy of the black race.'

In 1907, Herr Deinburg, the German Secretary of State, visited the German colonies and on February 18th, 1908,

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he said to the Budget Committee of the Reichstag: 'The planters are at war with everybody—with myself, with the Government, with the local officials, and, finally, with the natives.

'It makes a very unfavourable impression on one to see so many white men go about with negro whips. . . . Labourers are obtained under circumstances which could not be distinguished from slave-hunts. . . . It has even happened that settlers have seated themselves at the wells with revolvers and have prevented the natives from watering their cattle, in order to compel them to leave the latter behind.'

A year before the Great War, E. Alexander Powell, late of the American Consular Service in Egypt, reported, in his book *The Last Frontier*, the result of his special investigations into colonial administration in Africa.

'There is not a town in German East Africa', he wrote, 'where you cannot see boys of from eight to fourteen years, shackled by chains running from iron collar to iron collar, and guarded by soldiers with loaded rifles, doing the work of men under a deadly sun. Natives with bleeding backs are constantly making their way into British and Belgian territory with tales of maltreatment by German planters, while stories of German tyranny, brutality and corruption—of some instances of which I was myself a witness—were staple topics of conversation on every club verandah and steamer's deck along these coasts.'

Chapter XXXIII

GERMAN AMBITION IN AFRICA

I

Germany's colonial empire before the Great War consisted of these African colonies—of New Guinea, some islands in the Pacific, the Carolines, Samoa, Heligoland and Kiao-chau. That was all, coming so late to the scramble, she had been able to get. And everything was detached and scattered, even in the same continent of Africa. It had to be remedied. It could be remedied only in Africa. The Germans had a great scheme of a Mittel-Afrika Empire.

The general idea was that, starting from German East Africa, the German Mittel-Afrika Empire must traverse the continent from the Indian to the Atlantic Ocean.

Governor Paul Lautwein thought that, for the sake of territorial continuity, Mittel-Afrika should link up the Cameroons, German East Africa and the northern half of South-West Africa, which Germany already had, with Belgian Congo, strips of territory from the British, French and Portuguese possessions, and British South Africa.

Emil Zimmerman suggested the Cameroons, German East Africa, Belgian Congo, British East Africa, Uganda, French Equatorial Africa and large parts of Portuguese West Africa.

Hans Delbrück mentioned the Belgian and French Congo, Nigeria, Lagos, Uganda, Zanzibar, Madeira, the Azores and

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the Cape Verde Isles. 'Will the English ever concede us such a colonial empire? I hope they will be compelled to do so.'

Oscar Karsstedt spoke simply of the French, English, Belgian and Portuguese possessions in Central Africa; and Kuhlmann sentimentally of 'the boundaries drawn for us by history and oversea possessions corresponding with our greatness'.

An anonymous book called *Welt-Politik und Kein Krieg*, whose origin was understood to be the German Embassy in London, declared mildly for the economic penetration of Belgian and Portuguese territories.

Other writers linked Mittel-Afrika by alliance—west, with South America, and north, by way of friendly Arab states, with Mittel-Europa and Turkey.

Mittel-Afrika itself was considered essential to Germany as field of supply for tropical materials, a market for industrial products, an outlet for the German nation, a basis for German world power. It would, above everything, be unassailable—for a million black soldiers (Zimmerman—but why only a million?) could be trained to defend it, and it would have its own naval bases, U-boats, harbours, coal-ing stations, munition depots, repairing docks. It would, moreover, command the vital lines of British communication with India and Australia.

Dr. Solf, German Colonial Secretary, said during the war: 'Africa is no longer the dark continent, but has become the foreland of Europe with a great part to play as the producer of tropical raw materials for European industries.'

'The existing position of Africa among the European colonising states is recent, haphazard and accidental. . . . Weak and ineffective powers are in possession of gigantic areas which they cannot develop, while Germany, in spite of her position and power, finds herself left in the cold with considerably smaller and far-scattered territories.'

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'In the Treaty of Peace there can only be the question of a *fresh partition*. Germany must receive a continuous domain, large in extent, because the war in Africa has shown that defensive power is in direct proportion to the size of the continuous area; with frontiers on both oceans and fortified naval bases, the importance of which has been demonstrated in this war.

'For our present unfavourable position in the Far East, England—apart from Japan—is chiefly responsible. The principal opponent of our expansion is Australia. But we shall never be able to exercise pressure on Australia from a base in the South Seas: we might very well do so from East Africa. . . .

'If we have a position of strength in Mittel-Afrika, with which India and Australia must reckon, then we can compel both of them to respect our wishes in the South Seas and in Eastern Asia, thereby driving the first wedge into the compact front of our opponents in Eastern Asia. . . .'

Some of the facts occur in a memorandum compiled by Smuts in July 1918.

If one comes to think of it, practically all of Africa that did not belong to Germany before 1914 belonged to her opponents. If Germany won the war why should she not take the whole of Africa? What a dream—what an empire—what a stake! No wonder Germany armed before 1914. No wonder she arms in the nineteen-thirties.

It will be noticed that none of these Germans particularly wanted the all but desert country of German South-West Africa, the mandate over which is all that came to the Union out of the Great War.

Smuts likes to say sometimes: 'We simple fellows from South Africa', 'we wild men from the veld'—it amuses

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him to say such things. But there were, even in the Union of South Africa, some who knew of Germany's African plans when, on August 4th, 1914, Germany entered Belgium, and, at midnight, Britain, pledged to maintain Belgian security, declared war on Germany.

It was actually the South African War that had put it in Germany's mind to build a fleet. ('Our future lies on the water.' 'The trident must be in our hand.' 'Germany must re-enter into her heritage of maritime dominion once unchallenged in the hands of the Hanse.') It was the building of this fleet that led directly, as Smuts says, to the Great War—or at least to England's participation in it, since the German fleet constituted the real challenge to her sea power.

There was England, he says, thoroughly entangled in South Africa, and Germany could take no advantage of it because she hadn't a fleet. And England, because she had the finest fleet in the world, could travel thousands of miles across the sea to make war in South Africa—troops, equipment and commerce as safe as if the sea were her own exclusive territory.

Then there was England's influence in the East, which, without a fleet, Germany absolutely could not rival. Then there was England's commerce. Then there was the question, peculiarly interesting to South Africa, of Germany's growing population.

That population was bounding up at the rate of a million a year; Germany could not hold the increase; millions upon millions of Germans were being lost to the Fatherland because Germany had no colonies and superfluous Germans accordingly went to America and other countries, and what really mattered about it all was not that Germany wanted expansion for the sake of her sons, but that she wanted her sons for the sake of expansion.

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So Germany needed an empire. And where could she get this empire? There was only Africa. . . .

She had already—talk of a Mittel-Afrika apart—made several attempts at dominion in South Africa. There was that plan Rhodes had intercepted of a German South-West Africa and a German East Africa linked up with Rhodesia and Northern Bechuanaland. There was a little business about St. Lucia Bay. There was the prodding of Dutch against English in the Transvaal. There was the desire to lease Walfisch Bay, concerning which Botha wrote in 1908: 'It is our opinion here that Germany's influence in South Africa should not be allowed to increase', and Smuts: 'From the point of view of South Africa's future, the German Empire is no desirable neighbour.'

Germany had begun to build her fleet after the Boer War with the strong notion that a fleet might lead to African dominion. Who would stop her if England did not, if one day, for some reason, England could not? The weak divided states of Southern Africa?

In 1909, when union was under way, there was a monthly journal started in South Africa whose chief object was union propaganda. It called itself *The State* and was edited by one of Milner's Kindergarten, and fear of Germany was a reason it gave for the necessity of union.

'Is it impossible', it asked, 'that towards the end of a successful European war, a foreign power, anxious for a temperate country to which to direct the stream of its emigrant citizens, should conquer South Africa? Suppose the British Navy had lost command of the sea . . . what should we be able to do? We should be half starving in a few weeks, if our imports of food stopped. Our industries would cease, and there would be armies of famished out-of-works. Possibly native rebellion would add to the horrors of the situation. The invading army would have practically

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nothing to do. It would not even have to defeat us. We have no army and no armament. . . . It would simply have to wait until we were prepared to come to terms. What would those terms be?

The State described what those terms would be, what German conquest would mean to South Africa. It pointed to the large force Germany maintained in German South-West and the supply there of guns, rifles and ammunition. To what purpose? . . .

If there was a man in the country who, from the beginning, understood the position, it was Smuts. He had, for this reason, no sooner arrived at union, than he had his defence plans made. And his Defence Force was just getting ready when there came the Great War.

3

It was twelve years since the Boer War. Men who had fought in the Boer War (and there were some who had begun fighting at the age of fifteen) were still young men. The Boers are a people tenacious of memory and tenacious of grievance. To-day, more than thirty years after the Boer War, the opposition party in the Union House is a party based on dislike of England. After the speeches that ended the Boer War ('Thy will be done'); after the speeches that ended the union conferences ('We are brothers'); before even the first Union Parliament had met, General Hertzog was angry because Botha was too pleasant with the English and not pleasant enough with him; there were Boers like de Wet who, having touched union, had flung it away as if the touch of union burnt them; there were men—a number of them Dutch—who, only recently, had participated in three great strikes and been put down by armed forces. The very head of those armed forces had wanted to use his power to show the English 'what a Boer commando

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looked like'. What was to be expected from South Africa when war broke out in August 1914?

It was a question the Germans, no less than the English, asked themselves.

4

In January 1907 Sir Eyre Crowe submitted to the British Foreign Office an analysis of Germany's foreign policy, with his reasons for believing that she meant to make war. He described in it Germany's methods of propaganda. 'The occult influence' (of the Chancellor's office at Berlin), he says, 'is not limited to the confines of the German Empire. That influence is perceived at work in New York, at St. Petersburg, at Vienna, at Madrid, Lisbon, Rome and Cairo, and even in London, where the German Embassy entertains confidential and largely unsuspected relations with a number of respectable and widely read papers. . . . It is known that the tradition of giving expression to the views of the German Government for the benefit of the British public, and even of the British Cabinet, by using other and less direct methods than the prescribed channel of open communication with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, survives at Carlton House Terrace.'

The influences which Sir Eyre Crowe perceived at work in the great capitals of the world were also, for most essential purposes, at work in South Africa. Germany not only, wrote Lord Buxton, Union Governor-General during the war, spent much money to develop German South-West Africa as a base against British dominions in case of war, accumulating war munitions far in excess of any defensive requirement against the unarmed natives, and designing its railway lines for strategic purposes against the Union—there were preparations even more sinister. 'It is a curious and significant fact that, for some years before the war, the

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personnel and activities of the German Consul-General in Cape Town were out of all proportion to those of the other consulates, or to Germany's actual interests in the Union; and there can be little doubt now that the Germans had, before the war, been carrying on an assiduous anti-British propaganda in the Union, and had been engaged in acquiring information military and political.'

Smuts himself said in the House, soon after war began in Europe: 'All this German talk, all this rumour of German sympathies, has been spread by German commercial agents and German dealers, and I hope the people will realise that these Germans are placing a dagger into the heart of South Africa which they are eager to press home. . . . The Government of this country is in possession of information which clearly shows that the German Government has had its eyes on South Africa for many days. . . . South Africa is a jewel, and a good many wars in the past have been waged over its possession. . . .' 'We have seen', he said again, 'German South-West Africa being used as a base for intrigue against this part of the Empire—for the undermining of our liberties and the seducing of our citizens. . . . We are all the more determined because we see how dangerous it is to have next door to us a neighbour such as the German Empire. . . .'

He spoke of this German talk, this rumour of German sympathies, because there were those in South Africa who, if anything, wanted to enter the war on the side of the Germans, who, indeed, saw in the war the longed-for opportunity of revenge against England.

5

The moment Germany entered Belgium, some hours before even England declared war on Germany, Botha sent a cable to the Imperial Government saying the Union re-



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cognised its obligations to the Empire and was prepared, in the event of war, to defend its own territory. To this end he offered to release, for necessary service elsewhere, six out of the seven thousand-odd imperial troops at the moment in South Africa. England expanded Botha's offer to its fullest sense, and not only accepted the offer of the released troops, but also asked the Union, as a 'great and urgent imperial service', to occupy as much of German South-West as would control the two ports of Swakopmund and Luderitzbucht, together with the wireless stations.

Botha had sent his cable meaning just what he said: that, in case of hostilities, South Africa would defend itself. It had not entered his mind that South Africa, twelve years after the Boer War, full of internal troubles, full even of German sympathies, might be asked by England to take the offensive against Germany. He pointed out the difficulties. A cable answered him that the wireless station at Windhoek was in constant touch with Germany and German warships and that to take it was absolutely necessary.

Parliament was not sitting. A decision had to be made at once. It was made. Even while a congress of General Hertzog's party unanimously condemned the Union's participation in war, one member saying frankly that, if anything, this was an opportunity to fight against, rather than for, England, the Union Government agreed to go against German South-West Africa.

There remained now the necessity of confronting with the accomplished fact a Union that was becoming daily less united, and a Parliament that might indignantly resent never having been consulted.

The Defence Force commandants were convened and told that the departure of the imperial troops rendered it necessary to call out the Defence Force. They were told about German South-West Africa. Beyers, the Com-

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mandant-General, knew that the Defence Force was to go to German South-West Africa, and it was with his approval (as Smuts came to point out) that the imperial forces were sent away.

In Pretoria Beyers saw much of de la Rey, Smuts' associate in the Boer War, and now a senator. In Pretoria too was one Maritz, who had gone to German South-West Africa in 1902 and helped the Germans against the Hereros. Now he held a commission in the Union Defence Force and was in command of six hundred men on the German South-West border and had news from the Germans.

Finally there was, as ever, the prophet van Rensburg. De la Rey had, within the last few years, sunk himself more and more deeply in religion, and more and more too he relied on the prophecies of van Rensburg. Many relied on the prophecies of van Rensburg.

Van Rensburg had seen the grey bull, Germany, emerging victorious from among all the fighting bulls. He had seen forty thousand Germans marching through the streets of London. Botha, he prophesied, would remain with his people, but Smuts would disappear. On a dark cloud, from which blood poured, stood the number fifteen; and de la Rey came home bareheaded and there was a carriage with flowers—high dignity, thought van Rensburg, for de la Rey.

When de la Rey heard that the Defence Force was being called out to assist England he bitterly disapproved. All one night, at Botha's house, Botha, Schalk Burger and Smuts argued with him. De la Rey saw in the crisis God's will that the Boers should go against, rather than with, England.

Botha asked him if he thought it could really be God's will that the Boers should get back their liberty along a road of dishonour and treason. De la Rey wondered if it might not be the greater dishonour and treason for the

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Boers to reject this God-given chance of restoring their old Republics.

He was prevailed upon, in the end, to wait still a little longer before hastening into war against England, and meanwhile to persuade the burghers who were due to meet on August the fifteenth to go home.

He faithfully did so. The burghers went home. It seemed that, after all, nothing was to come of van Rensburg's prophecy of great events connected with the number fifteen.

Yet no sooner were the burghers dispersed than doubts returned to de la Rey.

He abandoned himself once more to communion with van Rensburg and God.

6

The House met on September 4th and sat for a week. Before it met the Germans had crossed the border of German South-West Africa into the Union. They said the offence was accidental—who could really tell where the border was in that desert? They apologised. But it was with a consciousness of lessened responsibility that Botha moved an address to the King expressing the Union's 'whole-hearted determination to take all measures necessary for defending the interests of the Union and co-operating with His Majesty's Imperial Government to maintain the security and integrity of the Empire.'

General Hertzog stood up to say that, for all he knew, Germany was right. It was, moreover, folly, he said, to antagonise a powerful nation like the Germans. Would it not be better to await the result in Europe? If Germany lost, South-West Africa would 'fall into our laps like a ripe apple'. If Germany won, South Africa would pay dearly.

It fell to Smuts to support Botha's resolution, to justify the Government and answer its critics:

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'Our mother countries', he said, 'have been attacked. Many of us descend from the people of Belgium; a good deal of French blood flows in our veins, and, further, England, our mother country, has been forced into war. . . .

'When we made peace at Vereeniging, and when we had to sign a treaty, I said that South Africa had fought for its liberty. You will find my words recorded. I said that our liberty was a certainty, and here we are to-day as a free people, able to develop as we please, and able to do as we want; and opposed to us there is a military compulsion and autocracy which is threatening to suppress and isolate the smaller nations. The question which has to be decided is whether we are going to do our duty, not only to ourselves, but to the whole world; whether we are to maintain our rights which we fought for. . . . We have shed many tears to secure what we have now. Are we going to keep what we have, or are we going to say: "Let them take it"?'

'General Hertzog has said this is not our war. He has said the Government asks the House to agree to wage war on our peaceful neighbours. Whose war is it then if it is not our war? . . . Who was the aggressor? . . . What has happened? It is not long since the borders of the Union were crossed by a German force, which has entrenched itself on South African territory. . . . Do the honourable members know that there are German vessels in Union waters? Do they know that, but for the protection afforded by the British fleet, it would not be safe to send goods from here? What are these German cruisers doing in South African waters? I will tell you that the German cruisers are, by means of the wireless stations in German South-West Africa, in continual communication with Germany, and that the South African trade and other trade is being continually threatened. But the time has come now to do our duty. When the war broke out the Union Government said to

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the Imperial Government: "We do not require your troops here, you may be able to use them better; we are in a position to look after ourselves." The offer was accepted at once. But the British Government said there were certain parts in German South-West which, in the present state of affairs, were a danger to the British Empire. There were German men-of-war in South African waters which, through the wireless stations, were in touch with Germany, and a serious threat to South African and British trade, so the British Government said: "There is work for you to do. . . ."

He now asked Parliament to give Government the right to do that work. By ninety-two votes to twelve, Parliament agreed. The followers of General Hertzog voted unanimously against the Government.

Chapter XXXIV

NUMBER FIFTEEN ON A DARK CLOUD

I

When the Germans, whether accidentally or not, crossed the borders of German South-West Africa into the Union, they had hardly the impossible idea of conquering, unassisted, with nine thousand men, a country twice as large as that part of it which, for two and a half years, had engaged the wealth and strength of the greatest power of the day. They had other expectations.

There was that large consulate at Cape Town. There were men going about the backveld speaking of a Boer Republic, protected by Germany. There had long been many thousands of Mausers and many machine guns in German South-West Africa ready to put into the hands of the Boers. There was that Colonel Maritz with his six hundred men on the German South-West African border. Even before January 1913 he had come to an understanding with the Germans and a hundred thousand marks had been placed at his disposal for his work, and also he might draw, Governor Seitz suggested, on the five thousand pounds the German Government had in a bank in Cape Town.

The Kaiser himself was in it. While the Union forces were on their way to Luderitzbucht he cabled to Governor Seitz: 'Guarantee Boers existence Boer Republics if they attack immediately.'

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'We expected', said *Der Tag* in April 1915, 'that British India would rise. We expected trouble in Ireland. We expected a triumphal rebellion in South Africa.'

A rebellion indeed there was in South Africa. And in fact, the war once having begun, the Germans had as much right to foment a rising of the Boers against the British, as the British had to foment a rising of the Arabs against the Turks. The evidence, however, is that the Germans fomented a rising before the war began.

2

It was on the day (September 15th) the Union forces left for Luderitzbucht—the day too on which Governor Seitz, at Beyers's request, expected to meet Beyers on the German border and waited for him in vain, that two historical things happened in the Union. One was that Beyers resigned his command of the Union forces. And another was that, on his way with de la Rey from Pretoria to Johannesburg, de la Rey, in the most dramatic, fantastic fashion, was killed.

3

Johannesburg was really, in those years of 1913 and 1914, what far-away, romantic people have always believed it to be. Miners walked about with revolvers and dynamite. Syndicalists had control. Householders laid in a stock of candles and filled their baths for fear strikers might stop their light and water. Frightened workmen were pulled out of their jobs and pushed in again. Scabs replaced strikers and strikers threatened scabs. Shops were looted, offices burnt down, houses blown up. Soldiers and strikers fired at one another in the streets, men and women were killed; Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, parleying with representatives of trades unions, were covered (the

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representatives boasted) with revolvers. Now, on top of everything, the members of a gang of robbers and murderers were running about the town, who (on this same day of September 15th) had killed a detective; they had escaped in a car, and the police were after them. Every main road leading from and to Johannesburg was picketed by armed police, who had instructions to hold up all passing cars—and particularly cars containing three men—and among those roads was the road from Pretoria to Johannesburg.

It was night. An unfortunate doctor, hurrying home, failed to stop when challenged, and was shot. The accident was not yet reported when Beyers and de la Rey, travelling on serious and secret business, were also challenged. A constable stepped into the middle of the road, held up his hand and shouted 'Halt!' 'Do we stop?' Beyers asked de la Rey. 'No', answered de la Rey. 'We go on.'

They went on through the townships of Johannesburg. There were the two of them in the car and a chauffeur. They drove past a series of challenging policemen. It was half an hour from the time the first policeman had called 'Halt!' that a policeman, firing at a tyre of the hastening car to stop it, struck the road with his bullet and the bullet ricocheted and killed de la Rey. . . .

Well, Prophet van Rensburg had seen the number fifteen on a dark cloud, and de la Rey bareheaded and a carriage with flowers. . . .

Van Rensburg's prophecies were not infallibly right, but certainly the day was the fifteenth, and de la Rey was carried bareheaded to a room at an hotel numbered fifteen, and then there was a carriage with flowers.

4

The business on which Beyers and de la Rey were travelling when de la Rey was killed had to do very power-

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fully with Beyers's resignation. Beyers, in fact, had given his chauffeur instructions to prepare the car for a 'long journey', and they were on their way to a training camp of fifteen hundred young men who were due to rise in rebellion at 4 a.m. the next morning. From this camp they were to march on Pretoria, hoist the old Transvaal flag, release the Germans who were interned, and proclaim Beyers President and de la Rey Commandant-General of the Republican forces. They expected, said Beyers, no bloodshed. The Government, he prophesied, would resign rather than fire on its own people. The Government, indeed, was secretly *behind* its own people.

De la Rey had left the Senate at Cape Town a few days before in order to return to Pretoria. On the road an emissary from Colonel Maritz had boarded the train to tell him that all was ready with regard to German South-West Africa; Beyers had had the same message; and now, on September 15th, his letter of resignation was in the papers and it was also on its way to Smuts. The world knew of it as soon as Smuts.

He protested, he said in his letter (which was really a public manifesto), against Parliament's decision to attack German South-West without provocation. The majority of Boers protested against it. Cabinet Ministers in England had resigned because England had gone to war with Germany.

'It is said that Great Britain has taken part in this war for the sake of right and justice, in order to protect the independence of smaller nations and to comply with treaties. . . .

'History teaches us, after all, that whenever it suits her interest, Great Britain is always ready to protect smaller nations; but unhappily history also relates instances in which the sacred rights of independence of smaller nations

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have been violated, and treaties disregarded, by the same Empire. . . .

'It is said that war is being waged against the "barbarity" of the Germans. We have forgiven, but not forgotten, all the barbarities perpetrated in our own country during the South African War. . . .

'If the Union is attacked, Boer and Briton will defend this country side by side, and in such case I will deem it a great honour and privilege to take up my place at the head of our forces in defence of our fatherland. . . .'

Beyers had, several days before resigning, sent for Maritz. On the same day he had, 'as one soldier to another', wished success to the general in command of the forces going to German South-West Africa.

Smuts replied to his letter of resignation: 'Your bitter attack on Great Britain is not only entirely baseless, but it is the more unjustifiable coming as it does in the midst of a great war from the Commandant-General of one of the British Dominions. Your reference to barbarous acts during the South African War cannot justify the criminal devastation of Belgium and can only be calculated to sow hatred and division among the people of South Africa. You forget to mention that since the South African War the British people gave South Africa her entire freedom under a constitution which makes it possible for us to realise our national ideals along our own lines, and which, incidentally, allows you to write with impunity a letter for which you would, without doubt, be liable in the German Empire to the supreme penalty. . . .

'You speak of duty and honour; my conviction is that the people of South Africa will, in these dark days when the Government as well as the people of South Africa are put to the supreme test, have a clearer conception of duty and honour than is to be deduced from your letter and action.

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For the Dutch-speaking section in particular I cannot conceive anything more fatal and humiliating than a policy of lip-loyalty in fine weather and a policy of neutrality and pro-German sentiment in days of storm and stress. It may be that our peculiar internal circumstances and our backward condition after the Great War will place a limit on what we can do; but nevertheless I am convinced that the people will support the Government in carrying out the mandate of Parliament and, in this manner, which is the only legitimate one, fulfil their destiny to South Africa and to the Empire, and maintain their dearly won honour unblemished for the future.

‘Your resignation is hereby accepted.’

It may be remembered that it was Beyers who, in the Boer War, released two British prisoners, and sent them, fully equipped, as a Christmas present to French. And that it was Smuts who, when French told him of this graceful act, coldly denied Beyers’s right to be charming with his country’s property.

Botha and Smuts hurried from Cape Town to Pretoria to take control of a situation which at any moment might become desperate. They understood the significance of Beyers’s letter.

5

They met Beyers at de la Rey’s funeral. There was a passionate, angry crowd who believed that Botha and Smuts had arranged de la Rey’s murder. At the graveside Botha and Smuts protested in vain and Beyers swore by the dead man’s spirit that he was not disloyal. He met his fellow conspirators that night.

All over the country now the story spread that de la Rey had been deliberately murdered, and with it a fire of rebellion. Botha and Smuts begged Steyn, the ex-President of

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the Free State, to quieten the raging people, but he could not bring himself to speak. In one village after another—and particularly in the Free State—the Boers rose. There were men who waited until they were fully equipped (to go to German South-West Africa) before joining the rebels. De Wet, himself an ex-Cabinet Minister, led the rebels. He believed that de la Rey had been done to death. 'Our purpose', he presently wrote, 'is to get to Maritz, and after arriving there to return immediately with Maritz to Pretoria. There in the capital of South Africa we shall, if God (in whom all our trust is) so wills, haul down the flag and proclaim our independence.'

On October 3rd Smuts was still ostensibly enquiring whether there was 'any fear of treachery in connection with Maritz' movement'. But he knew the truth. While Maritz relied upon his ignorance he was collecting his forces to deal with him.

Within a week Maritz declared himself. He assembled his men on the German border. German troops flying the German flag joined him. He assured his men that he had not put on his uniform to serve England; condemned Smuts and Botha; invoked God; mentioned that his honour was more to him than his much loved wife and children; divested himself of the insignia of his British rank to become again, as he said, a common burgher (but called himself henceforth a general) and gave his men one minute to join the Germans or—with sinister possibilities—to be arrested and sent over the border. . . .

The troops under Maritz were about six hundred boys aged from seventeen to twenty-one. They all, except ten, followed Maritz. The ten who stood out were, for a time, kept prisoner by Maritz, and then sent to the Germans. They were released when the Union forces took German South-West Africa.

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Three days after Maritz took his men over to the Germans Smuts issued a proclamation which is almost a history of the causes of the rebellion:

‘ . . . Whereas the Government of the Protectorate of German South-West Africa has through widespread secret propaganda persistently endeavoured to seduce the citizens of the Defence Forces of the Union from their allegiance, and to cause rebellion and civil war within the Union;

‘ And whereas these efforts have so far succeeded that Lieutenant-Colonel Solomon Gerhardus Maritz, together with a number of his officers and a portion of the forces placed under his command, has shamefully and traitorously gone over to the enemy, and is now in open rebellion against the Government and people of the Union, and is in conjunction with the forces of the enemy invading the Northern portions of the Province of the Cape of Good Hope;

‘ And whereas there is grave reason to think that the Government of the Protectorate of German South-West Africa has through its numerous spies and agents communicated with and corrupted also other citizens of the Union under the false and treacherous pretext of favouring the establishment of a republic in South Africa; . . .

‘ Now, therefore . . . all Magisterial Districts in the Union of South Africa are, until further notice, placed under Martial Law. . . .’

There was open rebellion within a fortnight. Generals de Wet and Beyers signed a protest on their followers’ behalf saying their only object was ‘ the honour of God and the welfare of people and country’ . Another general assured them that their independence was guaranteed by the German Kaiser: General Beyers had the treaty in his pocket.

On October 27th the Government advised the rebels

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that if they went home quietly no measures would be taken against them.

On November 5th it included in the invitation to go home quietly also their leaders.

On November 12th it gave them until November 21st to go home quietly.

On November 21st it extended the period during which they might go home quietly.

Eleven and a half thousand Boers were by this time in rebellion.

It came to be called—Smuts called it—the Five Shilling Rebellion, because de Wet, being asked what grievance he had against the Government, replied in a speech that he had been fined five shillings by a magistrate, ‘one of the pestilential English’, for assaulting a native servant.

Chapter XXXV

THE FIVE SHILLING REBELLION

I

There are people in South Africa who say of Smuts that it is a misfortune he so often follows Kruger's principle of waiting for the tortoise to put its head out.

General Hertzog came to make that very accusation against him in Parliament. How was it, he asked, that *Smuts' policy of 'letting things develop' so often ended in bloodshed*? Did not Smuts deliberately 'sit behind the tortoise waiting to stick his fork into its head when it should put that head out?'

The criticism is both just and unjust. Smuts does wait: it is curious how he combines with his extraordinary energy the capacity—the inclination—to wait, and how often the end (whether due to his waiting policy or not) has been unhappy. Yet he does not wait because he wants things to develop, because he wants the tortoise to stick out its head so that he may put his fork into it. On the contrary. It is because he wants things not to develop, not to be stimulated by irritation, but to die down, that he waits.

It is a system he has found very satisfactory in his personal life. He has ignored threat and vilification, and no one has yet killed him, and now, twenty-odd years from the days when so many of his people began to regard him as a monster, a sort of idea is beginning to get about that perhaps he

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is not altogether evil, and he thinks this a great triumph for his system, and so why cannot whole nations wait? Alles sal reg kom.

There is in Smuts this strain of sentimentality or religiousness or mysticism or fatalism or particular philosophy that causes him, against all reason for hope, to be hopeful. Beneath the cynical surface lies what, in older times, they called this 'innocency', whose most striking manifestation has been his attitude to the Germans since the Great War. He cannot—cannot—believe that the Germans are different from himself and Botha. He chooses to forget that a large part of his own nation took the first opportunity of making war again.

Yet how could General Hertzog then go on to attribute to Smuts' policy of waiting the fraternal bloodshed of 1914?

To begin with, the conspiracy was ripe before he more than suspected it. He was still, on October 3rd, delaying action until Maritz should show his treachery, and collecting meanwhile his own forces. As soon as Maritz openly revolted he proclaimed martial law. Hardly had he proclaimed martial law when the rebellion was in full flood.

What was he now to do? Pacify the rebels, or put them down? He tried to pacify them by being reasonable, by begging them not to be deluded by foreign agents and to go home quietly. But the rebels would not go home quietly, they could only be pacified by the throwing over of England and the declaration of a republic. Should Smuts, after England had so trusted the Boers, in this terrible hour betray her? . . . The alternative remained to put the rebels down—to go against men beside whom he had fought so passionately only twelve years before, whom from his heart (as he says) he loved and loves.

He tried also to avoid that. . . . And then it was unavoidable.

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He might, of course, have deported a few people. Imagine it—after the outcry over the January deportations. He might, as he himself pointed out, have arrested the ring-leaders and then been charged with having begun the rebellion.

What Smuts answered when General Hertzog put on him the responsibility of the 1914 rebellion was this: 'The intention of the 1914 rebellion', he said, 'was an attempt to supplant the Government by a rebel administration. . . .' And, if it was not entirely that, there can be no doubt politics stimulated the rebellion. The commissioners who inquired into the rebellion found one of the contributory causes to be 'the political crisis in consequence of which General Hertzog was excluded from the Cabinet in 1912'.

It is true the commission was boycotted by the Nationalists, so that complete evidence was not obtainable. The fact, however, remains that, without exception, all the rebels were Nationalists, and all their opponents South African Party men. De la Rey himself said, when the Nationalist Party was formed: 'Of course, the Hertzog business is going to be serious. Now that we have no longer to fight Kaffirs or English we are bound to quarrel among ourselves—it is the way of the Boer.' And he used to tell how his father and uncle, living on adjacent farms, quarrelled about politics, arranged together for their wives' security, shared food and equipment, and rode off side by side to fight in opposing commandos.

In 1914 no Nationalist leader tried to quieten the friendly, courageous, God-fearing, deluded people; the painful anxiety of Botha and Smuts was read as weakness; it was a question of submitting to German protection or keeping faith with England—in the end Botha himself went against his people. He thought it better to go himself—to let the fight be between brothers rather than between nations. He

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preferred to have as few English as possible under him. Over two-thirds of his thirty thousand troops were loyalist Dutch. They came, as Smuts said, 'from one end of the country to another. . . . Regiment after regiment arose as at a wizard's wand. The response was almost embarrassing to the Government. . . . The Dutch people of South Africa feel that their honour is touched and they are determined to do their duty and wipe out this disgrace. . . . From the late war the Dutch people brought back little except their good name. That is what they value as their great asset in the world.' Yet, in his heart, he could never be sure to which they would be more loyal—to their passion or to their bond.

The 1914 rebellion is the most tragic and dramatic episode in Boer history. There was the death of de la Rey. De Wet lost his young son. He himself, escaping on horseback into the Kalahari Desert, was pursued by motor cars and ignominiously captured. Beyers, on his way to the Germans, was cornered with twenty-two other men; he attempted to swim the Vaal River on horseback; it was summer again (as when Smuts, in the Boer War, had to hasten across the Orange before it rose) and the Vaal was in heavy flood; his horse was shot under him; when he tried to free himself his bootlaces became entangled so that he could not swim; and he was drowned.

Shortly after there was the episode of Jopie Fourie, who led his men into rebellion while on active service, committed acts of terrorism, caused the death of a large number of loyalists, and was court-martialled and executed for high treason—the only death sentence confirmed in the rebellion. Smuts confirmed the sentence and came almost to lose his life for doing so.

January of 1915 and the rebellion was nearly over when Maritz said his ideal was 'too high and noble' to allow his

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enterprise to degenerate into mere marauding, and surrendered his men but himself fled to Portuguese territory, where (it is of a piece with the whole ironic drama) he alone among the rebels escaped the consequences of his actions.

The official recorder of the rebellion was with Smuts when news came of Beyers' death. He says Smuts looked stunned. Then he sat down to write to Mrs. Beyers. 'I cannot let her hear this officially. A friend must tell her.'

His companion says Smuts sat writing with his left hand curved over his eyes.

It is not the sort of thing one hears about Smuts (among his romantic fancies there is none for 'a strong man's tears'); but if indeed he had tears to hide, they were not for Beyers alone, they were for all the foes who had once been comrades and for the lovely dream of union that has not yet become reality.

The leaders of the rebellion might well have said, with King David: 'Lo, I have sinned and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thy hand, I pray thee, be against me and against my father's house.' Nevertheless, the killed and wounded on both sides were over a thousand. Three hundred rebel leaders were prosecuted by the Attorneys-General of the various provinces. The rank and file were kept in gaol and out of mischief, until after the German South-West African campaign. A few had 'gone home quietly'.

The rebellion was not yet ended when the South African Government informed the Imperial Government that it could now send an expedition to Walfisch Bay, and as soon as the rebellion was over Botha went himself to German South-West Africa and a few months later Smuts, having finished his work in Parliament and been indemnified by Parliament, for the second time in a year, for proclaiming martial law, followed him.

Chapter XXXVI

THE FIRST ALLIED SUCCESS: GERMAN SOUTH-WEST AFRICA

I

It says much for Smuts' resilience that, within a few months, he was exultantly declaring the story of South Africa to be 'one continuous epic. The success of the German South-West campaign is not only a notable achievement—it ranks, in a manner which history will record for all time, the first achievement of a united South African nation.'

A united South African nation.

At least, the German South-West campaign had gone like clockwork.

And if, indeed, it should have done since the Union forces were forty-four thousand against the Germans' nine thousand—the country, on the other hand, was more or less desert and as large as France; the Germans could play that guerrilla game against *the Union forces which the Boers had played against the British*; merely to traverse the country was something. The treks the Union forces made, said Smuts, were hardly conceivable. 'If you go through the history of wars you will perhaps only find in the Boer War records like these. . . . If you tell them of the march from Nonidas to Karabib they will not believe you; if you tell them how little water you drank and how few biscuits you ate, they will not believe you.' He laughed as he addressed

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these words to his troops. He was so exhilarated—he could laugh at last. Here was a fight not fought in one's own country or against brothers. For the first time South Africans had travelled by sea to take another land. He loved the emptiness of that land. He wanted no better garden than a desert. For eight years, night and day, as Botha said, his intellect, judgment, energy and courage had been tirelessly at a public desk. Here, for a few weeks, they had ease and space.

Luderitzbucht had been occupied since September of 1914. Towards the middle of February Botha arrived, and, towards the middle of April, Smuts.

Botha commanded the northern forces and Smuts the southern, central and eastern forces. The German commander-in-chief said the Boer soldiers reminded him, in their lack of discipline, not of a war but of a hippodrome. Still, by May 5th Smuts had taken Keetmanshoop and Gibeon in the south, and a week later Windhoek and its important wireless station in the north had fallen to Botha.

Of the Union soldiers Smuts said justly: 'Their behaviour has been that of gentlemen.' The Germans left in their charge their women and children. When the time came for the Germans to ask for terms Botha said to Smuts that it was not the surrender of the German forces he wanted but the surrender of their territory. 'We should not unduly hurt their pride; you will remember how keenly we ourselves felt such matters.'

He spoke to this effect in 1919 at Versailles. He now issued an order to his forces:

'Peace having been arranged in German South-West Africa, all ranks of the Union forces in that territory are reminded that self-restraint, courtesy and consideration of the feelings of others on the part of the troops, whose good fortune it is to be the victors, are essential.'

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2

It was after Smuts took Keetmanshoop and before Botha took Windhoek that Seitz, the Governor-General of German South-West, first suggested an armistice with a view to peace.

He explained, between the surrender of Keetmanshoop and Windhoek, that the news from Germany pointed to a long war in Europe, that Germany had taken valuable possessions in France and Belgium to which her colonies were not comparable, and that Germany's economic position was very good. What purpose, therefore, he asked, was there in fighting in South-West Africa? 'South Africa is not so rich in men and capital as to be able to afford to throw both uselessly away in order to attain military glory. Also for the future of South Africa in the world it is not quite a matter of indifference whether South Africa draws on itself the bitter enmity of a mighty people of seventy millions.'

Botha (having consulted Smuts) professed himself undisturbed by Seitz' information, but duly met Seitz and rejected those terms which he had known beforehand Seitz would offer: each side to keep the territory it now occupied until peace was made in Europe, a neutral zone to be created, an equal number of prisoners exchanged. He demanded surrender of the entire country. Fighting was resumed. Smuts returned to his work at Pretoria. Seitz, two months later, came to say that both his own troops and Germany's were now in a position of unusual strength. Botha remained undisturbed by Seitz' news and again demanded the whole of German South-West Africa.

Next day (July 4th) Seitz surrendered. A few days later peace was declared. The Union losses were five hundred and thirty killed and wounded; the taking of German

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South-West Africa was the first successful issue to the Allies in the war; and Smuts said to the people who welcomed him at the Union Buildings in Pretoria: 'Here we are gathered, English, Dutch and other nationalities who compose our white race—even our coloured people, Indians and natives—all gathered together in a feeling of gratitude for the great achievement which lies behind us. May I express the hope, the prayer, that from this great gathering to-day and the spirit which pervades you to-day, a spirit of union may go forth over the whole of our beloved land?'

Two weeks later, in the middle of August, he said: 'There is now the prospect of the Union becoming almost double its present area. If we continue on the road to union, our northern boundaries will not be where they now are, and we shall leave to our children a huge country, in which to develop a type for themselves, and to form a people who will be a true civilising agency in this dark continent. That is the large view.'

Where had one heard these words before?

A Nationalist paper remembered: 'The large view! It makes one think of the World's View where Rhodes is buried. What has Rhodes's Imperialism not cost South Africa! What Smuts' Imperialism has cost South Africa we also know! Our nation is torn asunder. The blood of brothers has been shed. There are thousands of broken hearts. What it will still cost us in the future we do not know.'

Chapter XXXVII

'THIS HELL INTO WHICH I HAVE WANDERED'

I

It was five years since the first election after union, and now it was time for another election.

How sweetly, despite Botha's personal defeat, that first election had gone! Every Boer had come in under Botha. Jameson would have been only too thankful to bring his party of thirty-nine into a coalition under Botha. There were eleven Independents from Natal and four Labour men, and Botha, with his majority of thirteen over all other parties, could do anything he liked.

Then, in 1912, General Hertzog, with a few followers, had broken away. Then there had been the labour troubles of 1913. Then there had been the deportations of 1914. Then there had been the rebellion of 1914. Then there had been the German South-West African campaign of 1915, which many of the Boers had greatly resented because, as they said, they were more akin to Germany than to England—a third or a half of them claimed German blood—and, indeed, the names of some of their most conspicuous men were German. . . .

So what a contrast between the election of 1910 and the election of 1915. One talked of blood now in a different sense. Merriman warned Smuts of dangers about him—of his negligent indifference to them. . . .

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Towards the end of September, a month before the election, a hall in a working-class quarter of Johannesburg was 'tastefully decorated' with flags and flowers, and a large shield said 'Welcome to General Smuts', and at eight o'clock Smuts was to speak from a platform outside and afterwards there was to be a 'social'.

Before eight o'clock a mob of between eight hundred and a thousand surrounded the platform—nearly all Dutch—singing over and over again the old Transvaal Volkslied, and showing photographs of Beyers and Jopie Fourie, and shouting: 'Who drowned Beyers? Who murdered Jopie Fourie? What have they done with the body of Jopie Fourie? Who shot us down in the streets?'

They met Smuts and his companions with these words, with rotten eggs, with stones and bricks, and gravel and dust gathered from the road. Smuts and his followers pushed their way through the crowd and mounted the platform, and one of his followers (Ewald Esselen, an ex-judge of the Republic, in 1915 leader of the Transvaal Bar) tried to shield Smuts' face with his hat, but Smuts waved the hat aside, and sat staring immovably at the crowd.

Then a leading woman socialist helped a man on to the platform. The man had a baby in his arms: 'That is Labuschagne's baby,' the woman shouted, 'the child of the man you shot. . . .'

Smuts himself describes the scene:

'We had an ugly time. It was not a political matter; it was an organised serious business. I realised that when we arrived. An unkempt, desperate-looking man was addressing the audience from the platform. . . . He boasted of carrying dynamite in his pocket for General Botha and myself. . . . We had to fight our way to the platform. There was a big placard: "The Martyrs of the 4th of July!" One man had a sort of poster with photographs of Fourie and Beyers, and

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beneath it the Nationalist motto: "Suid Afrika Eerste"—("South Africa First"). Another carried a baby. I said to him in Dutch, "Do take the child away; it may get killed." He refused. . . .

'Heavy stones were flung. . . . The situation was becoming so serious that I decided to abandon the meeting, and we started fighting our way through the crowd back to the motor car. That was the dangerous moment. That was the opportunity for the crowd to murder someone without the actual man who did the deed being seen. They had me down once, but I got up again and we pushed towards the car. My chauffeur had started the engine. But they turned his switch off, and he had a desperate fight to crank it up again—he was twice beaten down. Just as he got the engine running we entered the car and a man about two yards behind me fired at me point blank. . . . But those poor fools can't shoot. . . . A miserable mob, I felt sorry for them.'

Ewald Esselen gives a better description. He says he told Smuts before they ever went to the meeting that there would be trouble, although he did not actually think the trouble would be anything but vocal. 'Smuts laughed. "We'll go and have a look at them; we'll face them."

'I said: "Jannie, you'll get killed."

'He answered (smiling): "We're going to face them."

'The stones came, the rotten eggs came. When the affair was at its hottest Smuts said: "Esselen, this is too much. It will only lead to very serious things, we had better not try any further to hold a meeting." The next moment four or five men rushed at him, and he shouted: "Will you? Now we'll wait."'

Smuts was suddenly in a wild passion, says Esselen. He himself began to shout to the mob: 'You will kill General Smuts if you are not careful.' The mob sent back, he says, 'bloodthirsty howls' and, even while he was warning them,

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he had also to hold down Smuts, who was struggling from his grasp and shouting: 'I'll show them. Let me get at the devils. Let me get at them.'

At the car three shots were fired at Smuts. A miner, who was crushed between Smuts and some rioters, received a blow meant for Smuts from an iron-loaded pick-handle, and was knocked unconscious. A number of other people were injured. Smuts came away unhurt. He was calm again. 'You call this a social?' he said.

The platform was smashed and the hall wrecked. Bricks, stones, eggs, oranges, lumps of wood, bludgeons, bottles, scissors, sticks and a revolver were found by the police.

The Labour Party denied any connection with the outrage. But a Labour man offered to withdraw his candidature against Smuts for a written guarantee that the Government would go to the country a year after the declaration of peace in Europe. 'If I survive the present election as a Minister of the Union,' Smuts answered, 'and survive also the tactics of my opponents and other accidents of fate, there may be a situation to face after the war which will as little allow of my deserting my post as the situation of the last twelve months.'

2

Outrages, if not in act then in spirit and word, continued—they continued, indeed, for another twenty years. In time Smuts became used to them. He developed the habit of sitting motionless and wordless, with his eyes staring into some unknown region, while accusations spattered about him. In 1915 he was as yet unused to them. He knew he was not popular—could not explain himself, could not get at people. It was not pleasant to be disliked, but a philosopher might learn to bear it. To be treated, however, as a monster—with that idealism in one's heart, after all one had done:

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the old Transvaal days, the Boer War, responsible government, union—remembering all one dreamt still to do—that was unjust. 'I am the best-hated man in South Africa', he said, not smiling then over the words as he would to-day. 'Thousands', he said again, 'envy me my place and power. Yet what are they? My own people curse me; my name is a byword.'

There were meetings at which he could not hide his despondency. There were hardly meetings at which questions were not shouted to him about the bodies of de la Rey and Fourie. The widows of de la Rey and Fourie were brought into it.

Because of the threats of the Nationalists, and the belief that they might use, not merely Fourie's widow, but even his grave and body, for election purposes, the Government had thought it wiser not to disclose his burial place. They were perhaps wrong. For now the rumours got about that the body of Fourie, so far from being, as the Government said, decently buried in a grave, had been thrown into a pit at the back of the Pretoria gaol, and there covered with unslaked lime—so that both body and the evidence of what had been done to it might be destroyed. Smuts threatened to sue one man for libel who shouted aloud the inevitable story. Fourie's widow testified that she had three times approached Botha and Smuts for information about her husband's body, and never been given that information. She now nominated a time and date by which she was to be told when his grave would be opened and his body given her. If her demand was refused, the whole Boer nation, she vowed, would back it.

Smuts told her she could see her husband's body after the election. His grave was, in fact, opened six months later.

Now, in the name of de la Rey's widow, a manifesto was published (in Dutch—this is the sense of it): 'You know

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what I have lost and in how terrible a fashion. You know the cause of the great and bitter war in Europe. We heard of the shooting of the Prince and Princess of Servia. I thought what a dreadful world it was that allowed such deeds. . . . We ourselves had peace. How sweet were the days of peace when I did not know what so soon was to happen to me!’

And then Botha and others (she went on) had come to tell de la Rey that the Union must go to fight beyond its borders. And de la Rey had vowed he would rather die than agree to it. ‘I pray God to take me away, for God can do more than I’, he had said.

And he had indeed (she said) been taken away, and noble men had lost their lives and liberty, and all that remained for his widow was to hear always how great Smuts and Botha were, and was there never to be an end to it? ‘I would do anything to bring about that end, I am an Afrikaner woman with a national heart. If I can give the Afrikaner Volk a word of comfort it is this: Stand shoulder to shoulder, and heart to heart to work with stern spirit for right and justice and love and peace.’

This seems to be the characteristic peroration of public speeches. The letter, indeed, was that sort of thing. And so far, actually, was Mrs. de la Rey from having written it herself, that, as it happened, she and her daughters were staying at Smuts’ farm when it was published. . . .

The passion against Smuts grew—cries of brothers’ blood, Fourie’s body, the peace there would be in South Africa if only he and Botha could be got away.

He told his audience how profoundly he wished that too. ‘I would like nothing better than to be out of this hell into which I have wandered, and in which I have lived for the last two years. . . . But the Government cannot leave you. . . . The spirit of the devil is being disseminated among

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our people, a spirit of blackmail and lies. We have to exterminate this spirit of rebellion and unrest. Briton and Boer must combine to make a great nation. You can take my assurance that I shall work with my last breath for the good of South Africa.'

The date of the election was October 20th. A Nationalist cartoon showed Botha and Smuts with a sword marked 'Martial Law.'

Botha: And what shall we do with the sword?

Smuts: Steady, Louis. Wait till the twentieth, and if we're still at the helm, we'll have another chance to use that weapon.

In the election of 1910 every seat but one in the Free State had gone to Botha. In the election of 1915 every seat but one in the Free State went to General Hertzog. The South African Party, indeed, headed the election results; yet, with fifty-four seats, it no longer had a majority over all other parties, and it relied now on the promised support, during the war period, of Jameson's original party (which called itself now the Unionist Party) and the Independents. General Hertzog's Nationalist Party, beginning three years ago as a group of five, had grown to twenty-seven.

The Government continued to recruit men for Europe, and it also recruited men now for German East Africa. Smuts himself was the principal maker of recruiting speeches. He said England, that was doing more than seemed humanly possible, had appealed to the Union for help. Was she not justified? Could the Union refuse her? Was South Africa not, after all, a happy and prosperous country?

He called South Africa a happy country. He meant it. As he has a romantic contempt for ease of living and yearns (no less romantically) to suffer in the cause of duty, so he finds also a happiness in unhappiness—he likes the little

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thin needle that drills an emphasis through the heart of joy. How dull, he always says, are the dominions of Australia and New Zealand! How inspiring, by contrast, the active humanity—even the active inhumanity—of South Africa! It gives him a poignant joy to be a South African.

Chapter XXXVIII

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SMUTS

I

Smuts had not dreamt, when he was making those recruiting speeches, that he himself would have to take the Union forces to German East Africa. He had, in fact, already been offered the command and (for the political reasons one may well imagine) refused it. But the British general who was due to command had fallen ill, Smuts had again been called upon, and suddenly he was Lieutenant-General J. C. Smuts, commander-in-chief of the imperial forces in German East Africa, and the second youngest general in the British army.

Now England discovered Smuts. It was a romance of the most astonishing kind, a British romance, the greatest possible tribute to Britain, that the enemy leader of fourteen years ago was to-day a British leader, a general in the *British* army, leading his own men and Britain's together. It made the British feel (in those days when people asked themselves what they had done for God thus to hate them) that they could not be a bad and undeserving nation since they had it in them so to win over an honest enemy.

If they had not, by 1916, that personal experience of Smuts' individuality which later overwhelmed them, if they still contrasted his human qualities unfavourably with those of Botha, there yet remained more than enough in him to make them proud of his adherence, not only to their



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cause, but to themselves. The British saw in Smuts a reassurance of their virtues which they crucially needed. They spoke of his intellect, his industry, his 'uncanny insight into the essentials of a problem', his demonstrated adaptability to every test, the endless varied successes of his extraordinary career. That the British had once misunderstood him was no more than a tribute to a character 'too spacious and complex to be read off-hand.' . . . He was 'a remarkable combination of talents not usually found in the same person, unless, indeed, that person belongs to the small and select class of which the Caesars, the Cromwells and the Napoleons are the outstanding types'. He was 'the most conspicuous figure in Greater Britain'—'the general in whom the whole Empire has most confidence. . . .'

They said in South Africa (the Nationalists) that if the English were so delighted with Smuts, they might have him. 'He is nothing to us.' 'We don't care whether he goes or not.' 'He has left for German East to escape his difficulties here.' Now that he had abandoned his post to enter the service of a foreign Government, did he expect to take payment both from that Government and his own? (But he took nothing from England.) They opposed in Parliament a vote of thanks to him and Botha for the success of their campaign in German South-West Africa.

It could, after all, not have failed to be some relief to him to escape for a little while from that hell into which, as he said, he had wandered and lived for two years.

He left for German East Africa from Durban on February 12th, 1916. It was nearly a year before he saw his family again, and he was hardly back when he had to go away for another two and a half years. He calculates, now and then, the time he has spent at home and the time he has spent away from home and says it is not strange he and his children feel embarrassed with one another. 'I cannot approach

them and they do not approach me. I am what the newspapers would call a distinguished stranger to them. They say, "Who is this foreigner in the house?" They go to their mother.'

2

German East Africa lies on the Indian Ocean, south of the Equator, between the first and eleventh parallels; it is bounded by British East Africa, the Belgian Congo, Portuguese East Africa and Rhodesia; with an area of three hundred and sixty-four thousand square miles, it is twice the size of Germany. Chapter XXXII will have given some idea of its value to Germany. From German East Africa as a starting point was to arise the great German empire of Mittel-Afrika, which should not only supply Germany with tropical raw materials and take her goods and surplus population, and not only link up, through friendly Arab states, with Mittel-Europa and Turkey, but also menace India and Australia and British interests generally in the East. German East Africa was, even at this moment, menacing Eastern waters and plans in the East.

Smuts says he knows no more beautiful country than German East Africa. Lakes Tanganyika, Nyasa and Kivu are in it, and part of Victoria Nyanza. At Lake Nyasa there are peaks rising to ten thousand feet. Then comes the eastern 'rift valley', with its volcanoes. And then, suddenly, from a low plain, Kilimanjaro, over nineteen thousand seven hundred feet high, the highest mountain in Africa—an extinct volcano. Its base is in the tropics and its head is capped in ice. Glaciers fill its ravines. The waters of the glaciers flow by many rivers into the great Pangani. Below the glaciers a forest belt encircles the mountain. . . .

Some rivers flow into the Indian Ocean and others into the lakes. There are rivers and waterfalls everywhere, and

jungles beside the rivers, and primeval forests on the mountain slopes and grass ten feet high. There are swamps and plains and steppes and deserts. There are thousands of square miles of bush so thick that armies may pass one another without knowing it, and where, as Smuts says, 'it is impossible to enclose an enemy determined to escape.' There are palms and ferns and thorns; and trees—sycamore, baobab, tamarisk and mimosa. There are hippopotami and crocodile, land-turtle and water-turtle, ostrich and chimpanzee, lion and leopard, elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo, zebra, antelope and giraffe. The poles of Smuts' army field telegraph had to be twenty-two feet high because the giraffes used to scratch their necks against wires of normal height and pull them down. It was like fighting (said Colonel Josiah Wedgwood) in a zoo. Lions and other beasts of prey disputed water-holes with sentries. . . .

And not only beasts of prey, but birds of prey. Yet not only birds of prey, but beautiful small birds and beautiful strange insects. . . .

'The tall grasses', writes Mr. Francis Brett Young in *Marching On Tanga*, 'bent and rippled in the wind like a moving meadow at home. The lower air was full of dragon-flies. We could hear the brittle note of their stretched wings above the soft tremor of grasses swaying slowly as if they were in love with the laziness of their own soft motion. Clinging to the heads of the grasses, and swaying as they swayed, were many beetles—brilliant creatures with wing-cases blue-black and varied with the crimson of the cinnamon moth. . . . 'Never in my life', he writes of the dragon-flies again, 'had I seen such a show of bright ephemeral beauty.'

But then other insects than dragon-flies and beetles blue-black and crimson: insects not so benignly beautiful: tsetse fly and locusts, sandfleas and mosquitoes. With the rain

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come malaria and other fevers, and the sicknesses of animals; and men cannot march.

It was in February, the eve of the rainy season, that Smuts reached German East Africa. 'The word had gone forth from Berlin', he says, 'that East Africa, the jewel of the German Colonial Empire, was to be held at all costs.'

3

That was the most the Germans thought of doing or could do—hold on. The German troops that fought the Allies in German East Africa were twenty thousand—most of them black. The highest number of Allied troops in the field at any one time was fifty-five thousand. But altogether there were a hundred and fourteen thousand—also largely black or coloured; and then besides there were British sailors, Portuguese and Belgian natives. And the campaign before, during and after Smuts' time cost seventy-two million pounds.

On the other hand, the principal enemy was the country itself. It was the country, rather than the Germans, that had to be conquered. It was the country that was the deadlier opponent. There were units reduced to less than a third through malaria. For every South African that went down in battle four went down in sickness. . . .

Sometimes there was that terrible exhausting heat which precedes African storms. Often, on their long marches, the men had no tents. The storms made sponges of earth and groundsheet. The luxuriance of growth that results from such warmth and rain bred parasites fatal to new blood. . . .

If there was not this wild luxuriance of growth, there was desert. Clouds of sand, white, impenetrable and gritty, preceded, enveloped, followed everything. . . .

And there was the desolation. Often Smuts' men camped where no living thing—not a bird, nor an insect—had been

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before. They moved across country 'pathless and trackless' (says Smuts) 'but for the spoor of an elephant or the narrow footpath of a native.' He had to cut bush and mountains, he had to build bridges and railways. When he advanced, taking a railway through swamps and virgin forests, high grass had to be laid under sleepers that the sleepers might not sink into the marshy ground. Thousands of men were used in the building of these railways. Smuts himself reported, in an official despatch, that his advance was made into a terrain 'enormous in extent, with no known vital point anywhere, containing no important entries or centres, with practically no roads'.

The rains swept away in an hour bridges laboriously built and reduced his communications, as he says, to 'two hundred miles of quagmire'. The troops had to work 'under tropical conditions which not only produce bodily weariness and unfitness, but which create mental languor and depression and finally appal the stoutest hearts. To march day by day, and week by week, through the African jungle or high grass, in which vision is limited to a few yards, in which danger always lurks but seldom becomes visible, even when experienced, supplies a test to human nature often in the long run beyond the limits of human endurance. The efforts of all have been beyond praise. . . .'

4

He said the efforts of his men had been beyond praise. Other officers tell that the only troops really able to withstand, even temperamentally, the East African conditions were the coloured troops. Smuts, indeed, had not been in East Africa three months before he advised the Imperial Government that it was impossible to keep white troops there for any length of time, and began to train malaria-immune natives to replace them. In the middle of October

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he sent home between twelve and fifteen thousand South African troops, and replaced them by Nigerians and other blacks.

As for the South Africans, a miasma descended on their spirits no less than on their bodies. They struggled, indeed, as Smuts declared; they tried to behave, as again he said, like gentlemen; they tried to combat that miasma. They could not. South Africans are accustomed to emptiness and a clear sky. The swamps, the thick, damp warmth, the bush growth, the close impenetrability, the mystery of German East Africa, appalled them. 'You would not have known them', one of their officers says, 'for the boys of German South-West Africa.'

The other white troops were much the same. An active campaign, under English command, had been going on in German East Africa since 1914, and it had failed. The English had not, to begin with, appreciated the difficulties. A battalion of North Lancashires, a small force of Punjabis and some East African troops had been judged sufficient to take and hold this country twice as large as Germany and as difficult as existed in the world. An early offer of help from the Union had been refused. The Germans, by the time Smuts came, were in a position, with their growing native army, to attack the Belgian Congo and the various British territories that surrounded them. They had food enough: since, in preparation for an exhibition at Dar-es-Salaam to celebrate the opening of its new railway, they had ordered large stocks from Europe, and also the year had been agriculturally successful. They had armaments: for, though the English blockade had driven shipping from the lakes, it had not been able to stop the arrival of munitions at the coastal ports. An English attempt to attack from the sea at the port of Tanga had just been repelled with heavy loss.

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The Germans were entrenched in British territory, and threatening to blow up the only British railway line between the sea and the lake sources of the Nile, when Smuts arrived and decided, as in German South-West Africa, to attack at once and from all points of the compass.

The triumphant conclusion of such a scheme depends on accurate timing, and the success of every part of it—in short, on absolute self-confidence. Smuts had absolute self-confidence. He had also that habit of secrecy which is permanent with him. No one, according to both Mr. Brett Young and Colonel Wedgwood, ever knew what he proposed to do until the last swift moment. What he proposed to do now, at once, before the rains interfered, was to drive the Germans from the Kilimanjaro ranges into the fever-stricken swamps of the Pangani.

There was, as he explains, only one practicable gap, four or five miles wide, in this natural rampart. Here the enemy had been entrenching and fortifying for eighteen months. But it was the gateway to German East Africa, and it had to be taken at any cost.

Smuts decided to 'manœuvre' the enemy out of it—to make, not a frontal attack, but one of those flank attacks he has loved all his life, and that are indeed a part of his Boer heritage. It is the Boer way, he himself told Buxton, the Union Governor-General, 'to go round a difficulty rather than face it; to make a flank rather than a frontal attack.' But, with regard to the application of this principle in war, it was from Chaka, the Zulu, the Boers learnt the value of a flanking movement. Chaka described it as making the shape of a bull's horns to enclose an enemy before driving the centre home.

During the night of March 7th, then, Smuts advanced the greater part of his force against the Germans' left flank. Early next morning, fighting on mountain slopes through

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clefts and primeval forests, he took the foothills of Kilimanjaro—by surprise, as he says, and without effort. Before another day was gone the Germans had evacuated 'their practically impregnable position', and the result of the campaign was settled. Twelve days from the taking of Kilimanjaro (but at a greater cost in lives than of the whole German South-West campaign) Smuts was in complete possession of the Moschi-Aruscha area, the richest in German East.

There were some who thought that Smuts should now land a force at Dar-es-Salaam under cover of naval guns and advance along the new central railway. He decided against them (speaking officially) because of the coming monsoon and the coastal malaria. But he also decided against them (speaking unofficially) because he wanted 'none of that amphibious nonsense'. He chose instead to advance direct inland from Kilimanjaro, while another section of his army, led by the same van Deventer with whom he had worked in the Cape during the Boer War, made west, and, in a wide enveloping movement, cut the Germans off from supplies and reinforcements. It had been arranged at the beginning that the Belgians should advance eastward from Lake Tanganyika, and the British strike from Nyasaland in the south-west.

The forces Smuts had under him during the German East-African campaign were South Africans, East Africans, Rhodesians, Englishmen, a few Canadians and Australians, Portuguese, Belgians, Indians, West Indians, South and East African natives, Cape coloured men, Nigerians and Gold Coast negroes—the most polyglot army of the war.

It was the first time white South Africans had ever fought together with dark-skinned men, and, to their embarrassment, they could not help respecting them.

Chapter XXXIX

THE CONQUEST OF GERMAN EAST AFRICA

I

But now came the rainy season; now, by turns, it blazed and it poured and a humidity arose as of a Turkish bath. The men had to travel in light marching order with no more for their protection and comfort than groundsheet and blanket. They had often to abandon their tents. Behind them the mechanical transport was held up before mountain passes and bridges suddenly washed away, or stuck, bogged, in marshes; and for weeks they were cut off from their supply bases, had not enough food, had 'none of the small comforts' (in Smuts' words) 'which in this climate are real necessities'.

The expedition during these weeks in April was 'probably', says Smuts, 'without parallel in the history of the war'. He had made every possible enquiry about the conditions likely to meet him. No information, guess or warning presaged the 'unbelievable conditions' he did, in fact, encounter. In his own guerrilla days in the Cape there had been unprecedented rains. They were nothing to these German East rains that flooded every river, and washed away all his bridges and passes, and made swamps where swamps had not been before, and sudden new lakes.

He had to stop his advance until nearly the end of May. He then, in a month, covered two hundred and fifty miles

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—on half-rations, with half his white men down through malaria, and often lacking, of all things, water.

The mules and horses died of their own pests. They died in their tens of thousands. Mr. Brett Young (a medical officer at the time) speaks of 'the wretched animals—these gaunt skeletal mules and wasted bullocks', of the hollows in the quarters of the mules, and 'their strangely hungry faces. Some of them were also puffed beneath their bellies.' He describes the sick men: 'A little company of grey spectres, men of the regiment dragged slowly to the ambulance on their way back. They staggered along in their overcoats as though the weight of them was almost too much to be borne, and behind them walked the African stretcher-bearers trailing their kits and rifles. . . .' 'The Germans', he says, 'never left any possible source of food behind them.' For days 'our supply of rations failed us altogether. For ourselves we had small reserves of bully beef and biscuits, but the African followers had nothing. . . .'

On top of their own troubles, 'the enemy never hesitated to abandon their sick to our care when they found it difficult to feed them. . . . In a single day our ambulance admitted over seven per cent. of the whole force. . . . A long shed, in which lay two hundred Africans, left by the Germans to die, was ominously labelled "Typhus".'

On every side, says Mr. Brett Young, following the brilliant beginning, the campaign seemed to stagnate. Only one thing, he says, sustained them, and that was Smuts himself. They believed not merely in his strategy and courage, but in his luck. They had only to see 'the big Vauxhall in which Smuts daily risked his life' to be revived. . . . 'The more I think of it, the more I realise how the personality of that one man dominated the whole conduct of the war in East Africa. And I sometimes wonder what would have happened if fortune had not carried him safely through the

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risks he faced daily, for though his divisional generals or brigadiers might well have carried out in detail the broad strategic movements with which he quartered the whole country, we should have lacked the enormous psychical asset which his masterful courage gave us, and I think that we should have endured our deprivations and our sickness with a less happy confidence. . . .

'He always', one of his soldiers wrote, 'comes out early in the morning and gives the men on guard at his quarters a cup of coffee from his own hands. The fellows dote on him. We might have marched twenty miles, and if he happens to pass along the line the fellows stop and cheer him like the deuce. He lays himself open to the hardships of the men. We once saw him jump off his horse and put on a poor fellow who had dropped out on account of the fever, while he walked beside him and chatted to him the whole way. . . .'

'He is the idol of his army', others endorsed. 'The men will do anything for him and endure anything. They admire him as a military leader and respect him as a man ready to bear what they bear. . . .'

There were, at the same time, those who said that Smuts might have avoided the sickness and troubles that befell his troops if he had not followed his own particular plan of campaign, and if he had not driven them so hard through the rainy season. Their complaint came before the War Office. A Court of Inquiry sat. The Army Council derived from the court's conclusions the following:

Smuts was faced at the end of March 1916 with three courses:

- (1) To abandon further offensive action during the rainy season after a conspicuously successful opening campaign.
- (2) To undertake partial and necessarily indecisive local operations.

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(3) To adopt the course which he did adopt.

The council decided that, though Smuts' decision to advance into the heart of the enemy's country necessarily involved certain risks owing to the imminence of the rainy season and the attendant transport difficulties, the losses due to sickness would have been as great as those caused by the hardships endured in the course of the advance, while the material results gained would not have been secured and the campaign would have been prolonged. It held that many of the hardships were due to the inexperience of the administrative staffs and officers, the transport difficulties, the hastily raised troops, the novel conditions. Its conclusion was that Smuts' course shortened the campaign and upset the plans of the German command, and that the conduct of the troops, considering the exceptional difficulties, was admirable.

Nearly a year before the Defence Headquarters had communicated to the Press the same criticism and also Smuts' reply to it:

'That hardships have been involved is general knowledge and appears from official reports, but they were not borne either unnecessarily or in vain. . . . That the sufferings were even in part avoidable and due to mismanagement or neglect is not true.

'I have constantly lived with my troops. From first to last I have accompanied in the field the main division of my forces in their long and arduous advance, and I have personally witnessed their efforts and their hardships, but I know that everything animal or mechanical power could accomplish was done to supply them with what was necessary.'

He came later, in one of those moods when his conscience holds its own inquiry, to question whether indeed he had not expected too much of his men, imposed too hard a task under awful conditions. His conscience (as not infrequently)

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acquitted him: It said he could not have done otherwise. A timid strategy, a hesitation in taking risks, would have been fatal. . . .

Smuts does, in truth, feel that, at the crucial moment, nothing—no risk, no suffering—dare be considered: only the object. Routine commanders, he thinks, sometimes fail here.

They are prepared, he says, to lose a certain number of men and make their plans accordingly. But when the inevitable check comes, they hesitate to commit themselves further and the initial victory is not followed up.

'Tired! Thirsty! There is no such thing when the success of a big operation trembles in the balance.'

There is no such thing for himself, and he goes by that. It is long since Smuts discovered that the ferment in his mind seems incommunicable to other minds, and he has learnt therefore (the boy who, at sixteen, wrote so confidently to a stranger must have had to learn it) to keep his thoughts to himself; to give the mere surface of them to some who, indeed, deserve better; to be, as many report, secretive and arrogantly self-reliant. But he has not learnt to be equally doubtful of men's physical capacities. He went, in German East Africa, where his troops went and lived as they lived. He had malaria, to which he refused to submit, in German East Africa, which he still has, and to which he still refuses to submit. There are constant reports of him as looking, in the German East days, 'thin and ill', of wanting some arsenic and iron pills and going back to the front again; of arriving in Cape Town at the end of the campaign too sick to go to welcoming banquets. Every now and then, even in these times, the old fever returns, his dulled face and manner show it; but he does not declare himself ill or forgo a duty, he walks about with his fever and tiredness, accepting them as a part of that life which is

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dedicated to things other than his personal sensations. . . . So, if fear and privation and the pains of the body are nothing to him, why should they trouble other men? . . .

The time arrived, nevertheless, when, with the second rainy season of the year approaching, he called upon von Lettow-Vorbeck, the German commander, to surrender, and von Lettow presumed that 'as far as force was concerned Smuts had reached the end of his resources' and refused to surrender.

In the end what, precisely, Smuts conquered was his chief enemy, the land. What he actually never beat was his lesser enemy, the men themselves. Those evaded him. 'As a matter of strict historical accuracy', says the writer of *With Botha and Smuts in Africa* (W. Whittall, late Lieutenant-Commander, R.N., of the Armoured Car Division), 'Smuts did not at any time succeed in compelling the Germans to fight a decisive action. By means of rapidly carried-out enveloping movements the Germans were evicted from all the best and most fertile areas of the Colony, but the fact remains that they were always able to elude the final decisive stroke that would have destroyed their army.'

What, in short, Smuts himself had done to the British in the Boer War, the Germans now did to him. A few Germans were still holding out in the mountains, playing Smuts' own guerrilla game of other days, when peace was made in Europe.

2

Yet the same officer, who admits that the Germans themselves were never entirely beaten in German East Africa, points out how within a fortnight, 'by the genius of a great soldier the position (of the previous eighteen months) was completely reversed', and how 'by a series of operations as brilliantly conceived and carried out as any in the annals of

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tropical war', the Germans, so far from holding their own and part of British territory, had lost the very best of their land. And when Smuts described his plan of campaign to Lord French 'his story' (said French), 'though told in the simplest and plainest language, revealed to me unmistakably the mind of a great strategist and tactician.'

German East Africa was, in effect, won, but Smuts' own work remained, as he felt, uncompleted when, in the middle of January 1917, he was called upon to leave it for a greater work still. An Imperial Conference was meeting in London, which the Premiers of the different Dominions were to attend. Botha could not go because of the unrest in South Africa. It was suggested therefore that Smuts should go in his stead.

Chapter XL

THE BRITISH WAR CABINET

I

He came back to South Africa to tell the people that 'not only have we, in co-operation with the other Imperial forces there, conquered German East Africa, but we have secured far more. Through our own efforts and our own sacrifices we have secured a voice in the ultimate disposal of this sub-continent. . . . Whatever happens to German East Africa . . . this at least we know, that our advice will be considered when the time comes to settle matters. . . . And we have done our duty, and nobody will be able to say we have been petty or small, or have been concerned with our own petty affairs and not done our great duty in the great world. We have followed in the footsteps of the Voortrekkers and Pioneers, and I trust that future pioneers will continue in these steps, and that South Africa, instead of being a small, cramped, puny country, gnawing at its own entrails, will have a larger freedom and a better life, and will become the great country which is its destiny. . . .'

He spoke like that. He had been away from the Union for a year and he had forgotten—in his innocence, sentimental about being home again, thinking that he had not shamed his country in East Africa, thinking there was work he might do for it in England, he had forgotten that he might not speak like that among his own people. What!

THE BRITISH WAR CABINET

Smuts dared to compare himself with the Voortrekkers! The counterpart of Rhodes, the equal betrayer of South Africa, the same sort of megalomaniac with the Table Bay-to-Mediterranean talk—no less prepared to sacrifice to his annexation spirit holy justice, folk-feelings, Church and brother's blood—he, Smuts, had the impudence to compare his work with the work of the Voortrekkers!

They used the term 'impudence'. They said exactly those things. What, they declaimed, had it not already cost South Africa that Botha had once gone to England to become a Privy Councillor and borrow five million pounds? A war loan of thirty millions and untold harm to South Africa! No less. What might it not now cost South Africa that Smuts too was to go to England and get a Privy Councillorship? 'Heaven help South Africa!'

There was only one comfort. It could not, at least, be said that he was going to England ('Home!' they exploded) to represent the Boers. He was going, let it be understood, simply as a private Imperialist, and, as was apparent to everyone, because South Africa was now too small for him.

To the criticism that South Africa was now too small for him, Smuts replied: 'I have heard it stated', he said, 'that South Africa is now too small for me. I do not want to speak personally: it is not a time now to speak personally. But let me say this, that South Africa is not too small for me, and that every drop of blood and every bit of courage and determination I have in me will go to the service of my country. Whether it is here in the Union, whether it is away in East Africa, or whether it is at the Council Chamber of the Empire, I pray that I may have strength to do my duty with courage and determination, and I trust that nothing I shall ever do will injure the position of South Africa.'

In the English House of Commons, Bonar Law quoted Carlyle: 'Intellect is not, as some men think, a tool. It is a

THE BRITISH WAR CABINET

hand which can handle any tool. General Smuts is a proof of the truth of that saying.'

In the Union Parliament Merriman opposed the Nationalists' condemnation of Smuts. He recalled to them Smuts' services to their Republics: 'That is what he did for you, his own people, and for that we remember him; for, thank God, we English are men enough to acknowledge the gallant deeds of our enemies.'

He arrived in England in March of 1917. While he protested that he was 'only a simple Boer unused to the ways of fashionable society', London hailed in him, with an enthusiasm that was a measure of suffering, the first conqueror of the war. America had not yet come in. Russia was going out. The war was at its bitterest. Merely to know that he had come, the old enemy, saying: 'The cause I fought for fifteen years ago is the cause for which I am fighting to-day. I fought for liberty and freedom then and I am fighting for them to-day'—merely to have his adherence was a justification before the Lord in those times when, like an animal corrected by the whip, one felt that pain perhaps meant one's own wickedness. He had but to show himself—fresh, different, unbeaten, with his 'alles-sal-reg-kom' spirit, for hearts to be lifted and hope and resolution to be renewed. 'He represents the ideal that the world is seeking to establish, and the larger vision in all this tangle of circumstances.'

On the twentieth of March, Mr. Lloyd George, presiding, introduced him to the Imperial War Cabinet as 'one of the most brilliant generals in this war'. The Imperial War Cabinet was an association of the Dominion Premiers who were attending the Imperial Conference, with the British War Cabinet. And Smuts had barely taken his seat when there shone forth from the 'simple Boer' a genius for affairs so notable that England, for England's sake, determined not to lose it.



J. C. SMUTS AND LORD MILNER
LONDON, 1917

THE BRITISH WAR CABINET

From every quarter came suggestions how Smuts could be used. He was asked to preside over the Irish National Convention. The Palestine command was offered him. Mr. Winston Churchill wrote an article which all but declared that, if Smuts were not kept in England, England deserved to go under. 'At this moment', he wrote, 'there arrives in England from the outer marches of the Empire a new and altogether extraordinary man. He is a politician. He is a lawyer-politician. He has been a Minister of the Crown. He was once an Attorney-General. He is now a Lieutenant-General. The stormy and hazardous roads he has travelled by would fill all the acts and scenes of a drama. He has warred against us—well we know it. He has quelled rebellion against our own flag with unswerving loyalty and unfailing shrewdness. He has led raids at desperate odds and conquered provinces by scientific strategy. . . . His astonishing career and his versatile achievements are only the index of a profound sagacity and a cool, far-reaching comprehension. . . .'

Admiral Fisher wrote to a friend that he believed Bonar Law had 'splendidly pressed for Botha to be made a Field Marshal', and that he himself thought Botha should be made Secretary for War and Smuts employed in France. 'Wouldn't it be lovely? *Smuts in France, and Botha at War Office!* . . .'

Mr. Lloyd George invited him to join his War Cabinet. Among the four original members of the War Cabinet was Milner. It was eighteen years since he and Smuts had first met in conference—in Bloemfontein—as enemies. Since his Transvaal days he had lain, thrust aside, in what Smuts called the political wilderness. Now England needed him. Now, with him, she needed Smuts.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1870

Smuts is born at Malmesbury in the Cape Colony. In 1870 Lobengula, the last of the great Zulus, succeeds his father in Matabeleland; Rhodes lands in Natal; and England claims possession of the diamond fields.

1882

He learns to read and write in the village of Riebeek West.

1886

Having made personal enquiries about matriculating at the Victoria College, Stellenbosch, he sells some cattle to help pay for his education there. At Stellenbosch he learns his Greek grammar by heart in a week, becomes interested in philosophy and English and German poetry, heads all his examinations, and meets Sibella Margaretha Krige.

1888

He replies imperially to a speech of Rhodes at Stellenbosch.

1891

Having won the Ebdon Scholarship, he goes to read law at Cambridge. He supplements his scholarship by pledging his life policy.

1893

He wins the George Long Prize at Cambridge.

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CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1894

While pursuing 'an unprecedented career' at Cambridge, which ends with his heading simultaneously both parts of the Law Tripos, he writes a book called *Walt Whitman, a Study in the Evolution of Personality*, that anticipates psycho-analysis and his own philosophy of Holism. Not published.

1895

Having read in chambers in London, he returns to South Africa, is admitted to the Cape Bar, settles in Cape Town, supports Rhodes in Kimberley, is disillusioned by the Jameson Raid.

1896

Partly out of this disillusionment, partly for the greater opportunities, Smuts settles in a Johannesburg that grows daily more vehement over the Boer-Uitlander position.

1897

He marries Sibella Margaretha Krige.

1898

While still a second-class burgher he becomes State Attorney (Attorney-General) and takes control of the detective department to stop corruption.

1899

He goes with Kruger to Bloemfontein to meet Milner and negotiates personally with the British agent in the Transvaal for peace. He writes *A Century of Wrong*.

1900

He is left in charge of Pretoria and removes the Boers' state funds from Pretoria under shell fire. These state

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

funds, which the Boers use to conduct their war, are the origin of the Kruger-millions legend. He goes on commando.

1901

He becomes a Commandant-General and leads a guerilla band in the Cape Colony. In his saddle-bag he carries Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

1902

The last act in the Boer War is Smuts' siege of O'okiep, on the border of Namaqualand, and from O'okiep he travels to Vereeniging to assist in the peace negotiations.

1904

The Transvaal becomes a Crown Colony administered by Milner. Smuts refuses to join Milner's Legislative Council.

1905

Chinese are indentured to work on the Rand mines. The Liberals in England win an election on a cry of Chinese slavery. Smuts goes to England to get from them responsible government for the Transvaal and Orange River Colony.

1907

Het Volk Party of Botha and Smuts win the first election under Responsible Government and take office. Smuts holds three portfolios.

1910

Union.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1912

General Hertzog is dissatisfied and presently forms his own party.

1913

Strikes in Johannesburg.

1914

Smuts deports nine strike leaders. There are Boers who see in the Great War their chance to rebel against England. Botha and Smuts put down the rebellion.

1915

Botha and Smuts go personally against German South-West Africa. Strikes, rebellion and war against Germany leave a residue of bitterness throughout the Union. Smuts' life is attempted in Johannesburg during an election campaign.

1916

Smuts is gazetted a general in the British Army and conquers German East Africa.

1917

Smuts, taking Botha's place at the Imperial Conference, is invited by Mr. Lloyd George to join his War Cabinet.

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PERSONAL means derived directly from General Smuts.

PRIVATE SOURCE means derived from materials (not publicly accessible) written or collected by him.

PRIVATE INFORMATION means derived from talk with his family or other reliable people.

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There is a particular obligation, gratefully acknowledged, to Colonel Deneys Reitz's book *Commando*, and to Sir Owen Seaman.

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